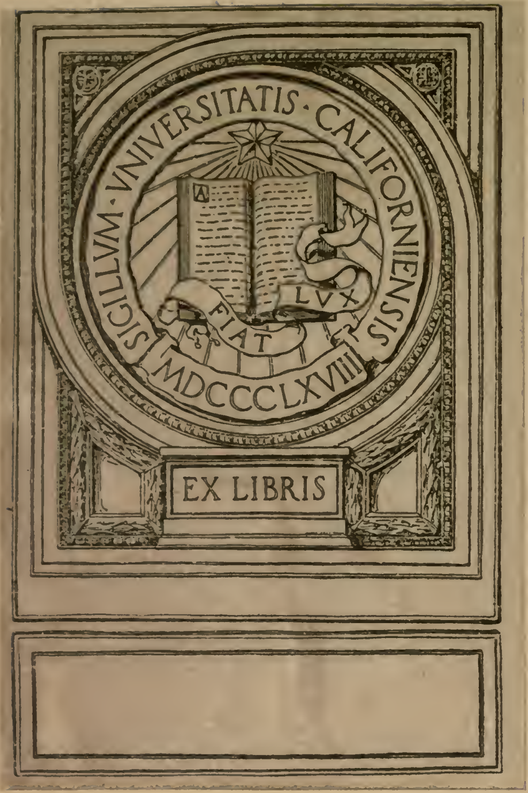
MY·FRIENDS·THE·FRENCH

BY·ROBERT·H·SHERARD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ROBERT HARBOROUGH SHERARD.

Frontispiece.

MY FRIENDS THE FRENCH

WITH DISCURSIVE ALLUSIONS TO OTHER PEOPLE

BY

ROBERT HARBOROUGH SHERARD

Author of "Twenty Years in Paris," etc. etc.

ILLUSTRATED

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TO

IRENE OSGOOD

DEAREST AND BEST OF FRIENDS

THIS BOOK

IS DEDICATED

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CHAPTER I

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"ANOTHER husband! No, thank you! I have just had some. *Je sors d'en prendre, des maris*! Husbands! Oh! la! la!"

And the pretty little woman who said these things shook her head most decisively, and laughed more than once, with scorn. Each time her laughter was twice echoed, once from a group of women who were collected at the far end of the passage, just outside the judge's door, and again from the thick body of men who filled the corridor right up to the head of the staircase.

In the laugh of the women there was indignant repudiation, while the men gave a note of incredulousness to their guffaw.

Contemptuous glances were exchanged between the two sexes.

It was in that gloomy and malodorous passage in the Palais de Justice on to which opens the *cabinet* or chamber of the judge who officiates in the preliminaries to divorce suits. This passage is reached by a staircase which leads up from the extreme end of the Salle des Pas Perdus, or great hall. At the bottom of the staircase to the right is the very room in which the Revolutionary Tribunal sat, where Marie Antoinette faced with queenly dignity the rabble of her persecutors.

A notice painted on the wall indicates that by this staircase may be reached the *Cabinet des Conciliations*, —that is to say, the Room of Reconciliation. The French law ordains that before a husband or wife may sue for divorce the judge shall endeavour to reconcile them. It is in the Room of Reconciliation that the attempt is made. One has heard of cases where the words of the judge have been effective, and where two angry spouses, softened by judicial eloquence, have left the *cabinet des conciliations* arm in arm, determined to make a fresh start.

In France the husband or wife who wishes to divorce applies through an *avoué*, who draws up a petition to the president of the tribunal. In this petition the various grievances complained of are set forth. The French law considers many offences as sufficient justification for divorce. Violent abuse, acts of brutality, incompatibility of temper even, are sufficient grounds for demanding a dissolution of the marriage bond. The same injustice marks in France still the relative treatment accorded to the two sexes. The laws made by the males will, I suppose, always favour the males. A woman can be divorced for adultery under any circumstances: a man can only be divorced for adultery by the wife to whom he has been unfaithful if his infidelity has been committed in the "home," in the *domicile conjugal*, as the French law styles it.

The man who drew up the divorce law and steered it against Catholic opposition through the two chambers was a hunchback and ill favoured. He had not much success with women, and I think that when he drew up his bill he remembered the fact, and made his law as hard on women as possible. I used to see him often in the company of General Boulanger, whose supporter and admirer he was, and I have heard him discussing the question of divorce. He looked impish, and somehow he always used to remind me of the boy who was seen stoning an unfortunate reptile while repeating: "I'll learn ye to be a toad." He seemed to say that he would "learn" women to be women.

A thing that this legislator particularly hated in women was their superstitiousness. In France it is a superstition that to touch a hunchback's hump brings good luck, and whenever the man went out he used to feel people's hands passing over his protuberance. It used to rouse him to Quilplike and malignant anger. He declared that it was almost always women who touched him for luck, and I have seen him foaming at the mouth with indignation at being used as a fetich. I do not think, however, that he ever went as far as did another very famous Parisian hunchback of my acquaintance, who had needles so arranged above his hump and under his coat that people patting his back, with a view to advancing their private interests, got badly pricked in the hands.

I cannot say that I understand this resentment. It seems to me that some people might feel flattered to pass as a mascot. It would be delightful, I used to think, to feel that one could bring luck to a fellow-being, and I could quite imagine how, if I were humpbacked, I should enjoy my walks abroad. Fancy seeing a poor, unhappy woman gliding up to one, furtively touching one's back, and then going away radiant and full of hope. It would enable one to realise what Alphonse Daudet used to say would be his ideal on earth: to keep a shop of human happiness. "I want to set up," he used to say to me, "as *marchand de bonheur*, dealer in happiness. People would come into my shop and tell me their troubles and I would give them just what they wanted to make things right."

Poor Daudet tried to carry into effect his benevolent schemes. As far as human ills can be remedied by money gifts he did more than any but the professional philanthropists. At one time he used to place on the mantelpiece of the study in which he held his weekly receptions a bowl, which was filled with silver coins, and it was understood that if any one of the Bohemians of letters who came to see him needed a little financial assistance he could go to the bowl and help himself. The experiment naturally failed. There were those who came to the receptions only for the sake of the bowl; there were those who put too liberal an interpretation on the mute invitation extended to them.

"I used to see fellows pocketing the coins by handfuls," Daudet told me, "and in the end I had to abandon the practice."

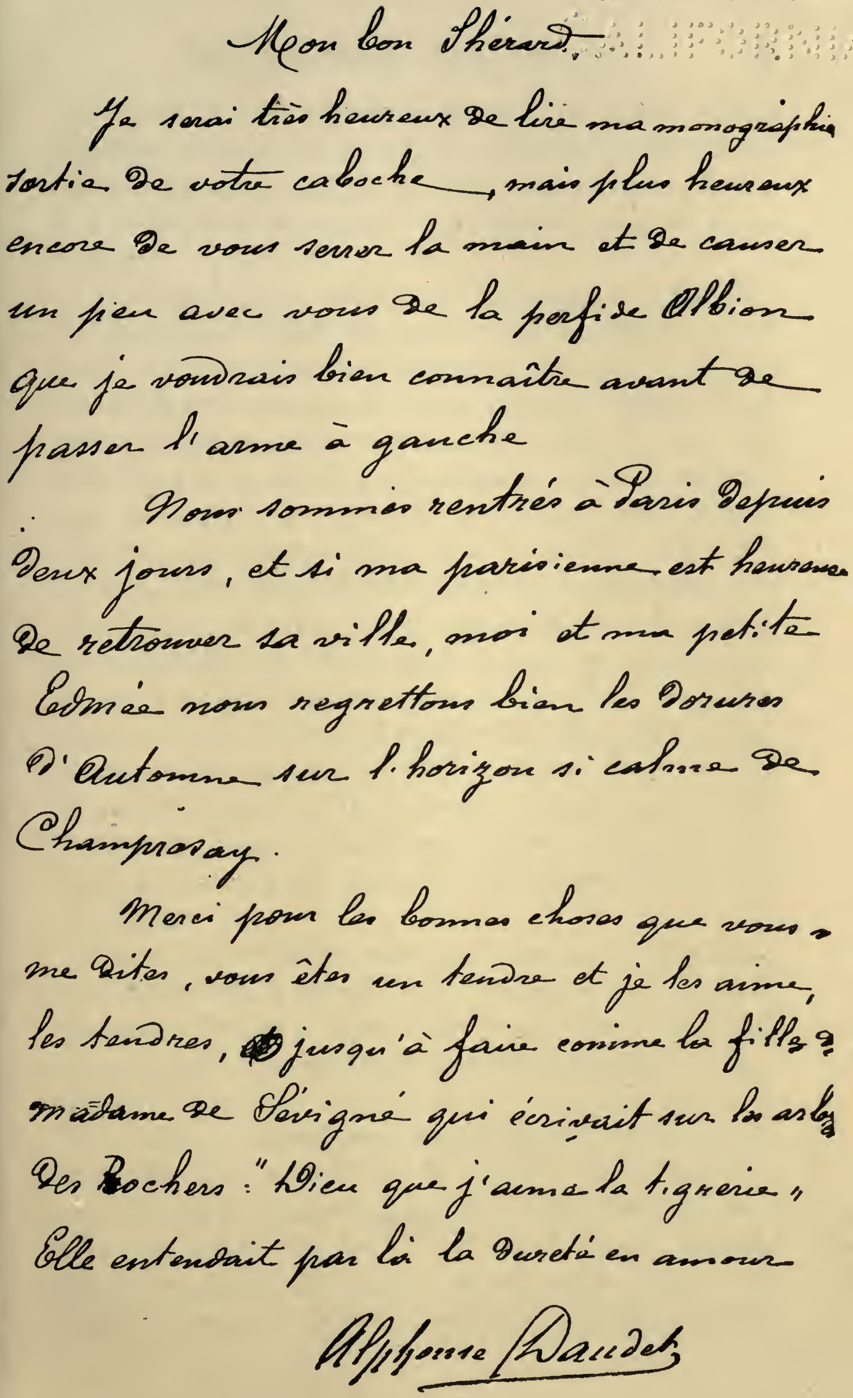
But he was ever liberal with his money. It was a joy of his, if he happened to see in the streets of Paris some mournful and woebegone wayfarer, on whose pale cheeks Famine had imprinted her stigmata, to brush hastily by the person and to press a five-franc piece into his hands. He used to call this "playing practical jokes on people." He was a very kind-hearted man, but curiously enough he had a peculiar and characteristic hatred of animals. Now people who hate animals are often very selfish. It is true that a great many animal lovers are abominably selfish. I was once at a dinner party at which Gustave Larroumet, at that time Director of Fine Arts, discussed horses with Alphonse Daudet, and I was surprised and pained to hear them speaking of these animals with disgust and hatred. Daudet said that horses filled him with terror, while Larroumet insisted on the ugliness of the horse's mouth. He said that the aspect of a horse's mouth always filled him with nausea. Daudet had a strong detestation of dogs and asserted that this terror of them arose from the terrible scares which he had had as a child in the country round Nîmes, where mad dogs abound. I well remember how he described these terrors to me.

"My foster-mother," he said, "was an innkeeper, whose name was Garrimon, which is Provençal for Mountain Rat. There's a splendid name for you, Sherard. Why did I never use it in one of my stories? The drinking-rooms in Garrimon's inn were on the first floor of the house, whilst the room where I slept was a storey higher. I remember how I used to hear the brigandlike, black-hearted, dark-eyed, long-haired men stamping up the wooden stairs that led to the taproom, as I lay awake of nights. Gradually, *mon ami*, their voices would swell into a tumult—such an excitable race are we Provençaux—stimulated by each other's talk and by draughts of harmless lemonade. No; they rarely drank anything stronger than *limonade* or *orgeat*, for we don't drink in the South. We are born drunk there, drunk with vitality, drunk with the sun. Sometimes I used to hear the clash of steel, and then I would rise from my bed and peep out of the window. I could see the wild-looking yet most inoffensive villagers all armed to the teeth, one with a scythe, another with a rusty cutlass, another with an old-fashioned flintlock, and some with flails or bludgeons. Then I knew that a mad dog was out and about, and I used to hurry back to bed all trembling with fear. I used to draw the bedclothes over my head and yet I strained my ears to hear what was being said downstairs. And every time that the words '*Kin foü*' rose above the tumult of voices, the clinking of glasses and bottles and the clatter of arms, I used to start with affright. I used to tremble all over as I thought of the *Kin foü* (the mad dog) and of the terrible weapons which the men carried because they, strong, blackbearded men, were just as much frightened of him as was the little, quaking wretch who shivered at every sound that the wind made in the eaves of the old house. At times my imagination would be so worked upon, and my fear grow so great, that I used to jump from my cot and run screaming to Néno Garrimon, my foster-mother, and cling to her skirts for protection.

"And on one occasion, I actually met the *Kin foü*—a meeting which brought my horror to a climax and left an ineffaceable impression on my mind. It was on a summer evening, and I was walking home, carrying a little basket, along a path, white with dust, which led through thickly foliaged vines. Suddenly I heard a violent outburst of wild cries: '*Aou kin foü! Aou kin foü!*' followed by a discharge of fire-arms. Mad with terror I jumped into the vines, rolling head over heels in the dust and, as I lay there, unable to stir a finger, I heard the rush of the mad dog as it whirled by, as though a hurricane were passing, stones flying to the right and to the left of it, and a great cloud of white dust in the air above it; heard too its furious panting and saw the horrid gleam of its devouring eyes. My heart stopped beating in a paroxysm of terror, and I have never, never forgotten the violence of the alarm which overwhelmed me. Since that day I have always held dogs in an absolute horror, and this horror indeed extends itself to almost all animals. I quite admit that it is strange that a poet should feel so about any of Nature's works, but there it is. I am unable to master this hatred. It is a hatred in which I am quite uncompromising. I consider animals the most ugly and vilest part of creation, caricatures of what is basest and most loathsome in man. All my children have inherited my horror for them."

I thought of this the other day when I met Léon Daudet, who has now grown into a very big man, walking about pensively in the *Jardin des Plantes*. Perhaps the same reason took him there which has often taken me to the Zoo: to see if among the animals I could find one as ugly and as degraded as, well, as the enemy of the moment. Léon Daudet was one of the sons to whom Daudet dedicated "Sappho." Paris, by the way, paraphrased the text of that dedication. It will be remembered that Daudet wrote: "*Pour mes fils lorsqu'ils auront vingt ans*" (For my sons when they shall be twenty years old). Paris said what Daudet meant to write was: "*Pour mes fils lorsqu'ils auront vingt francs*" (For my sons when they shall have twenty francs). The implication was that Sappho was a venal person, and that the story of her should warn the young men of the dangers of such associations. Unfortunately an extraordinary idea reigns both in England and in America that "Sappho" is such an immoral book that its publication should be interdicted. I remember speaking to Léon, who is a very old friend, about this, and he expressed the greatest indignation that his father should ever have been suspected of writing an improper book. He told me that Alphonse Daudet was—and this I knew—most particular to avoid in his writings any suggestion of coarseness. "I always read over to him what I had written," said Léon, "and if by any chance there was anything even suggestive of what is not quite . . . you understand—he used to pull me up. He would be very indignant if he could know what is being said about his book." That is of course obvious from the work itself. The strangest thing is that a play adapted from this strong story formed the basis of a prosecution in New York, in which my friend Mr Marcus Mayer, the famous impressario, was one of the defendants. It is worth a good deal to hear the old gentleman relate his experiences as a prisoner at the bar. It should form one of the plums in his long-promised book of memoirs. He was acquitted, but none the less it is not to the credit of New York, whose stage is the most indecent in the world, that a play of such literary and social value should have been publicly branded as a pornographical work.

Alphonse Daudet was a southerner, and in the South, where Catholicism is still so strongly rooted in the minds of the people, brute beasts, considered as being soulless, are looked upon as entirely at the merciless disposal of man. Your kind-hearted Spaniard thinks



Mon bon Shérard,

Je serai très heureux de lire ma monographie sortie de votre caboche — mais plus heureux encore de vous serrer la main et de causer un peu avec vous de la perfide Albion que je voudrais bien connaître avant de passer l'arme à gauche

Nous sommes rentrés à Paris depuis deux jours, et si ma parisienne est heureuse de retrouver sa ville, moi et ma petite Edmée nous regrettons bien les dorures d'automne sur l'horizon si calme de Champrosay.

Merci pour les bonnes choses que vous me dites, vous êtes un tendre et je les aime, les tendres, jusqu'à faire comme la fille de madame de Sévigné qui écrivait sur les arbres des Rochers: "Dieu que j'aime la tigrerie" Elle entendait par là la dureté en amour

Alphonse Daudet

FACSIMILE OF A LETTER FROM ALPHONSE DAUDET TO AUTHOR.

you mad if you complain of the brutalities of his *corridas di muerte*, his bull-fights. He can't understand. A bull, a horse; that has no soul? It is of no account. Its blood may be spilled. Its sufferings appeal to no God.

I think they do, and I have hopes that on the Day of Judgment, after Humanity has watched with a great sigh of relief the closing of the awful registers in which are recorded all the sins of man against God, great clouds of anger will be seen rolling up upon the terrible face of the High Justiciary, as the records of our persistent sin against our poor mute fellow-beings, the lower animals, are unfolded. Oh! the horrors of the Spanish bull-fights, the equal horrors of our English slaughter-houses, and that eternal cracking of whips which in Paris no less than in London, but worst of all in the pitiless cities of the South, is like the *claque* of cruel demons applauding the hideous torments of the damned! Ernest Renan tried to convince me once that there was no future punishment for sinners. Can it really be true that people who are cruel to animals are to escape all punishment? One hopes not.

The Gustave Larroumet, the Director of Fine Arts, who spoke what seemed such nonsense to me about horses at Daudet's dinner party, was forced to resign his high post by a husband who took snapshots of him while the unwary minister was courting his wife. The husband threatened to publish the photographs unless the Director of Fine Arts sent in his resignation. "I will ruin your career," said this vindictive husband, and that is what he did. Larroumet was an amiable gentleman, who seemed to spend most of his time walking about on the lead roofs of the galleries of the

Palais Royal, on to which the windows of his *cabinet* in the Ministry of Fine Arts opened, smoking cigarettes. He had about a dozen packets of *caporal superieur* always heaped up on his official table. He was not averse to the benefits of publicity. Once after I had visited him and had promised to write an account of our conversation—it was something to do with the Comédie Française—he sent round several times to know whether the article had appeared. On each occasion the missive was brought me by a mounted soldier, a circumstance which vastly impressed my *concierge*. I remember a case where a young *employé* at one of the ministries was able to win the heart of a somewhat refractory Dulcinée, by sending her his appeals for a rendezvous by one of the dragoons who ride messages for the ministries. To receive a letter which has been carried by a minister's *planton* is to see one's importance vastly enhanced in one's street.

It gives one the same sort of satisfaction that a certain kind of American derives from receiving from the hotel clerk, after he has duly "registered," a "voluminous mail." So real is this satisfaction that, to cater for it, people in the States are asked to insert, as an advertisement in a certain directory, their names and addresses, the result promised being "showers of mail." *Se donner de l'importance*, to make oneself out somebody or something, is as natural to a human being as it is to the poor hen, when in danger, to puff out her feathers so as to appear more formidable.

Larroumet always used to receive me immediately my name was announced by the *huissier*, who quite abandoned his *morgue* in speaking to me. To abandon one's *morgue*, by the way, is a Gallicism for putting off one's side. However, one day the attendant told me that the *patron*, or boss, really was engaged. He spoke in so mysterious a manner that I have since thought that his visitor may have been the lady who was afterwards to figure in the set of photographs which ruined this politician. Accordingly I had to wait. Indeed that day I failed to see the director, for when he was able to receive, I gave up my turn to an actor of the Comédie Française, who had come to complain about the treatment he had met with in that year's promotion. He had confided his troubles to me at great length, speaking at the top of his voice, so that all the other people waiting in the minister's antechamber could hear what he said. His great grievance was the favouritism with which, as he said, the actresses are treated in the House of Molière by contrast with the men. "Parbleu," he said, and kept repeating, "they have got something which we have not." As to his meaning, nobody of the many present can have entertained any doubt, either men or women, and it seemed to me a strange thing for such a man to say in such a place. There are many characteristics, however, of the French which appear curious to an Englishman before he knows this charming and light-hearted people with proper thoroughness.

Their freedom of speech, the matter-of-fact way in which they speak of organs and functions of the body, and the humour they seem to discover in the baser physiological manifestations, will always shock and surprise the intolerant Britisher. I remember my astonishment once at Daudet's dinner-table, at which women and children were present, to hear old Monsieur Edmond de Goncourt relate an anecdote about a woman journalist and her devotion for an old polemical writer who had taken her to his study and his bosom.

The old writer had been very ill and the doctors in attendance on him desired to make a certain analysis. But the nature of the man's illness had prevented him that day from supplying what the doctors wanted, "and so," said Monsieur Edmond de Goncourt, "this devoted woman supplied what was lacking herself." I will add that a hush fell on the table and that Daudet, who was a man of great delicacy, gently scolded his old friend. But at any rate hypocrisy is not a fault of the French—at least, of the Roman Catholic French. I make this reservation because it is quite true that amongst the Protestant French I certainly have met with some very sanctimonious, priggish individuals. I don't remember whether Tartuffe was a Protestant or not, but anyway his is not a type which one can discover nowadays amongst the Catholics. If he ever existed in that section of the French people we may take it that Molière whipped him out of the world. One cannot describe the relief one feels to get away from the ubiquitous English hypocrite, whose mind is often as evil and as unclean as his pretence to purity is great. I remember staying a few months ago in an English country house, where I met a very fine collection of typical English hypocrites of both sexes. One of these was a lady moving in very good society, who professed the greatest rigidity of principles. I will not attempt to describe the chilling disgust which she expressed when a vivacious young Frenchman, another of the guests, described at the luncheon table a curious epitaph he had read in a neighbouring church. This, it appeared, was inscribed on a memorial tablet which had been placed in the church by the widow of a former incumbent about a hundred years ago. It related that he had died leaving four sons and eleven daughters, and the epitaph went on to say that the monument had been raised to the memory of "a good father and an excellent husband" by his loving wife. Of course the young Frenchman would have been better advised not to have quoted this naïve record at table in the presence of ladies, but really the woman's indignation was almost too severe a punishment for his indiscretion. It occurred to me that such *outré* prudishness must necessarily mask a very unclean mind, and I was not greatly surprised when, some days later, I learned that the lady in question, being pecuniarily embarrassed, had written a most barefaced letter to an American journalist, who was one of the week-end party, and who was known to be earning a very big income, asking him to come and stay at her house, *solus cum solâ* (she being a widow and the man's wife and family being in the States), a letter which was as open an offer of herself and as impudent a piece of soliciting as it would be possible for any female to address to a male. And at another house I heard a man indignantly rebuked for a reference to natural children, his reprimander being a man who was in the habit of bringing into the house a certain sporting paper which owes its vogue in moral England to the gross obscenities with which its front page is defiled, a paper which he used to leave lying about where any woman or child in the place might pick it up.

Of course the horror of any reference to illegitimacy is a general English characteristic, which, as it is mainly confined to the middle classes, may, one supposes, be attributed to the hereditary objection of the Anglo-Saxons (from which those middle classes are largely, if not entirely, recruited) to the bastardy of their Norman Conqueror. One can imagine the joy with which the Saxon predecessors of our predominant *bourgeoisie* used, when whipped back into their kennels, to sneer at William's illegitimacy. Man has few pleasures keener than that afforded by the power to deride or contemn his superior. It is a mean characteristic, but then there is much meanness in the human composition. Even eminent men have not shown themselves free from this petty spirit. One is reminded of Rogers the banker, who was a poet in his *moments perdus*, and who was filled with a consuming envy of any superiority or advantage in anyone who approached him. One morning at one of his famous breakfasts he was heard to mutter: "Thank God, he has bad teeth," referring to a rich young nobleman, who was good-looking, faultlessly dressed and who was just then the lion of London society. Rogers had been profoundly miserable about the gifts which Fortune had showered on his guest, until he found in the man's defective dentition some gratification to his spite.

As a lad, by the way, I used to hear from my mother many things about the author of "The Tear." "I assure you, my dear lady, I spend my life in defending you," was a remark he once made to Lady ——, who, at one of these breakfasts, seeing him in animated conversation with his neighbour, had bent over the table, exclaiming: "Now, I am sure, Mr Rogers, you are saying something dreadful about me." It was Rogers, who had his *grandes entrées* at the Court of St James, who, when my great-grandfather, William Wordsworth, was presented to Queen Victoria, on the occasion of his appointment as Poet Laureate, lent the economical old gentleman his Court dress. The same suit by the way afterwards served the same purpose for Alfred Tennyson. One wonders what has become of those garments, on what rubbish heap those Parnassian rags are mouldering. Possibly, turned into good foolscap paper, they have served some other poet to write upon. It would be worthy of the irony of the gods if that very paper did come beneath the pen of Charles Algernon Swinburne, that greatest of poets, of whose success Alfred Tennyson was so envious that he ordered Moxon to cease the publication of his first volume of poems unless he wished to lose his remunerative connection with himself.

I suppose that in no trade more than in letters, and in no section of authorship more than amongst poets, is what the Germans call *Brodneid* (bread-envy, professional jealousy) more strongly pronounced, and there was this excuse for Tennyson, that he was a very poor man. My mother remembers how, as a girl, being full of admiration for the young poet who was to succeed her grandfather in Laureate honours, she was taken over to see Mr Tennyson by Mrs Taylor (afterwards Lady Taylor), the wife of another poet of some distinction, author of "Philip van Arteveldt." Tennyson received them very badly, showing great irritation at being disturbed, and when Mrs Taylor rallied him on his manner, he said: "Madam, I am a poor man, and as I can't afford to buy *The Times* I hire it from the stationer's. He charges me one penny for it, which entitles me to keep it an hour. Why will people always select just that hour to come and call upon me?" After which he flung out of the room, leaving Mrs Tennyson to apologise for his *brusquerie*. She said that she thought Alfred smoked far too much; his pipe was never out of his mouth.

CHAPTER II

Illegitimacy—Difference of French Attitude—The Gravest Insult in England—And in France—Prejudices of English, and of French Readers—Two publishing Experts—Monsieur Pierre Laffitte—On Magazines in France—Monsieur Jean-Joseph Renaud—Literary Earnings—The Hero and the Horse—In the Divorce Court—Hope, Eternal--Monsieur, Madame, and Monsieur Jules—Marriage, Divorce and Free Union—More liberal Treatment of Wives in France—Monsieur's Weekly Allowance—French Housewifery—Injustices towards English Wives—Cottons and Cleanliness—Woollens and Washing—The Jews in Warsaw

THE contempt of the English middle and lower classes for unfortunate children whose parents were not married is so pronounced that the large reading public resents as an insult any reference to such monsters of immorality as natural children. I remember a chat I once had in his office in Bolton with young Mr Lever Tillotson, who does a large business in supplying the newspapers with serial fiction. He told me how very careful he had to be as to the moral quality of the stuff he sent out. "In one of our recent serials," he said, "the author had introduced a girl whose parents had not been married, and the editor received such a number of complaints from the readers of his paper that he was forced to stop the publication of the story."

Amongst the lower classes in England the word "bastard" (commonly pronounced "barstard") is the very gravest insult that one person can address to another. It illustrates the fundamental difference in the characters of the two nations that amongst the

CALIFORNIA

JEAN JOSEPH-RENAUD

The champion gentleman fencer of France. He has never been beaten. Is well known at the Sword Club in London. Monsieur Renaud is a popular author and a famous journalist.

FIGARO ILLUSTR
BERLIN

JULES HURET,

The leading journalist in France. He is known as "the King of Interviewers." It was Monsieur Huret who first interviewed Captain Dreyfus.

To face page 17.

French to reproach a human being with the fact that his parents were not married when he was begotten would redound only to the discredit and ridicule of the insulter. In France the most offensive thing that one man can say to another is to call him *un feignant* (*fainéant*), which means an idler, a do-nothing. It is the worst reproach that the industrious Frenchman can level against a man, to tax him with idleness. In England, of course, we are on our knees before what we call the leisured classes. The way in which it was impressed upon me how grave an offence the word *fainéant* is in the ears of a Frenchman, will be illustrated later on from one of my own experiences in Paris.

One does not mean to say that French readers of all classes will tolerate references to immorality. I was talking the other day on board the *Heliopolis*, on my way to Egypt, with Monsieur Pierre Laffitte, the enterprising publisher of *Je Sais Tout*, and other very popular magazines on the model of the English and American periodicals, and Monsieur Laffitte, who describes himself modestly as "*un tout petit Américain*" (placing his hand about a foot from the floor), complained of the very great difficulty he experienced in finding matter for the readers of *Je Sais Tout*, which is primarily a magazine for family reading. We had come to this topic in connection with Monsieur Jean-Joseph Renaud, the fencer and author, who, as I knew, had been engaged by Monsieur Laffitte to write a series of gruesome stories, the *genre macabre*, Monsieur Renaud having acquired considerable reputation in this branch of fiction by the success of his book "Le Chercheur de Merveilleux."

"Yes," said Monsieur Laffitte, "the gruesome tale seems the only thing that I can use for my paper.

I can't publish the ordinary French *nouvelle* about men and women, as my magazine is for family reading and French parents are very, very strict. On the other hand the sentimental love story in which English readers of every age so delight does not go down at all in France. The French won't have it. So one does not know what to give them, and when I have worked out this *genre macabre* how I shall fill my paper is what is perplexing my head.

"I will confess," he added, "that, when I first started publishing magazines of the English kind in Paris, I had thought that I might be able to use a good deal of the matter that appears in the English and American periodicals, by arrangement with the publishers and authors. Well, to show you the great difference that there is between English and American readers on the one hand and our French reading public on the other, out of a huge pile of English and American magazines the readers of my staff were unable to find more than about three stories, and as many articles, which would have been of any use to us. On the other hand when I started *Jeunesse*, my magazine for children (which, by the way, was a dead failure, a *four*, a frost), the staff readers of that magazine found in the same magazines an enormous quantity of tales and articles which were just the very thing for my periodical. That is to say that your stories for grown-ups very well suit our French children, and on the other hand that you could not get French men and women to read them."

I pointed out to Monsieur Pierre Laffitte that there is a way of presenting dangerous matter which renders it available for family use, and was proceeding to describe how that very able publicist, Mr Hall

Caine, had succeeded in getting the very clergy of England to advertise a play in which a number of street-walkers figured on the stage, but as to my great surprise Monsieur Laffitte told me that he had never heard of Hall Caine, and so my illustration missed its point, I did not pursue the topic.

I had some further conversation with the energetic young publisher, who described the great difficulties which beset the publication of magazines and the comparatively small remuneration that could be looked for in this field in France.

"Now here am I," he said. "This voyage to Egypt is the first trip which my wife and I have been able to allow ourselves. When I think of the huge incomes which my colleagues in England and America are earning!"

I bade him take heart of grace, and told him of the beginnings of such men as Lord Northcliffe, C.A.P., Sir George Newnes, and especially of Mr S. S. McClure of *McClure's Magazine*, now one of the best "propositions" in the United States. However, Monsieur Laffitte, like all men who are going to be successful, seemed profoundly discontented.

"We can make no income out of our advertisements," he said. "My advertisements in *Je Sais Tout* don't bring me in anything." On the other hand, he said, his expenses for contributions were very heavy. He told me that he had just arranged with that eminent Academician, Monsieur Henri Lavedan, for a serial story for *Je Sais Tout* and that he was paying him at the rate of two shillings and twopence halfpenny the line. I was aware, by the way, that the rates paid were very much in excess of what French writers for the press usually obtain, because Jean-

Joseph Renaud had shown me his contract for the series of gruesome tales referred to above and I had noticed that the rate offered worked out at about five pounds a thousand words.

Now many writers of fiction in France, contributors to good papers of very large circulations, have to be satisfied with one halfpenny a line. In fact I have heard unattached journalists in Paris, who eke out a precarious existence by contributing salacious little tales to the popular papers, describe their trade as a dog's life—*Un métier de chien.*

Once at Champrosay at a dinner party at Daudet's house a very popular writer described his life before he made a hit with a novel which would have landed him in gaol in England, and told us that many months his income in the bad old days never reached eighty francs. "A dog's life! A dog's life!" he kept repeating, although it had led him to wealth, the red ribbon of the Legion of Honour and a universal notoriety. I remember how, apropos of his exclamation about a dog's life, the master of the house began to talk of dogs and his hatred for them.

Daudet's detestation of animals *en masse* is fortunately rare, though one often comes across people who cannot bear certain kinds of animals. Many people object to dogs; others have a real horror of cats; mice and rats are an aversion to many, and not to women alone, and there are even brave men who are afraid of cattle and of horses. I was greatly surprised when out walking the other day in Northamptonshire with a friend, a very celebrated fencer, to hear him say that he would rather not approach a cow that was grazing quietly in a field through which we were passing. He afterwards told me that he was very nervous about horses, did not like to go near them, and when out driving was always more or less frightened about being upset. He attributed this feeling to the fact that his mother had been frightened by a horse. It was a curious psychological phenomenon, for the man is in other respects as fearless as a man can be, an athlete, indifferent to danger. He drove off from the country house where we had been staying together in some trepidation, because the horse had reared a bit at the porch. He was on his way to London, where he was going to take a course of lessons in ju-jitsu. He wrote me a day or two later to tell me that " nothing is more amusing than to throw a man down to the ground—oh ! so easily—and then to operate on a nerve or a muscle of his as though you had him upon a post-mortem table." One can be very nervous and frightened about one thing and yet be a brave man.

All of which has taken me very far away from the pretty little woman in my first chapter whom I overheard in the corridor outside the Room of Reconciliation, as she indignantly repudiated the suggestion that as soon as she had got rid of her first husband, she should pick another amongst the men who were waiting at the top of the staircase.

I had accompanied a friend that day to the Divorce Court, or rather to that part of the Palais de Justice where the formalities preliminary to divorce are carried out, and it afforded me no little interest to watch the crowd of unhappy spouses, the men in one body and the women in another, who were waiting their turns to be admitted by a liveried usher into the presence of the judge. A *garde de Paris* in uniform helped the usher to keep order. He was grinning from ear to ear at the salacious jokes of the men, jokes which seemed to rouse the indignation of the women.

This was my friend's first visit to the court. He had to wait more than an hour before his name was called out. He then went into the judge's room, and here the formalities were disposed of with lightning rapidity; in fact, after asking him his name and address, the judge merely added: "Do you persist in your demand for divorce?" The petitioner assented, whereupon the judge signed his petition and said, "It is very well, monsieur," giving him a sign to withdraw. In this way this energetic magistrate was able to dispose of about sixty petitioners, male and female, in considerably less than two hours.

The women were admitted first, and as they came out they had to run the gauntlet through the serried ranks of the men. All sorts of stupid jokes were levelled at them. The poor girls looked for the most part nervous and distressed. One woman was crying. "Don't cry," said one of the men. "You'll make it up with him. A night with your heads on the same bolster will make that all right." "I snap my fingers at that," said the woman, "what is troubling me is that I have lost a day's work and that I have three children to feed."

Those hours passed in that malodorous corridor were not uninstructive. I could not help wondering why some of the people should want to divorce, when it was too apparent that human concerns could interest them but so short a while longer. There was one man who crawled into the waiting-room on crutches, the hopeless wreck of a man. He was old, he was broken, he was feeble, and yet he wished to divorce his wife, presumably with a view to marrying again. "My wife was unfaithful to me some years ago," he explained to us, "and I did not care then, so I didn't divorce. But now things have turned out so that I do care, and I am asking to be released." I wondered what woman could be willing to marry such a man, and whether the poor fellow did really think that life could hold any more happiness for him. The way in which human beings cling to hope, under even the most desperate circumstances, is the most pathetic of our characteristics.

We were a popular crowd and we were very confidential. Each man told of his grievance. The Anglo-Saxon would have perished rather than take strangers into the miserable confidences of his matrimonial mischances.

"*Cocu* I am, sir," one man informed me, "cuckold as it is not possible to be. *Dans les grandes largeurs!* Full width. Goodness gracious! what a temperament that woman has to be sure." He spoke of her with admiration, though he was pursuing his divorce.

Another man told me that his wife had run away from him and that he had had no news of her for the past five years. "This," he said, "will delay my divorce for two or three years it may be, and it is a pity, as I am living with *quelqu'un* and we are getting a family, and of course I shall never be able to legitimise these children."

In France the natural children of a married man —adulterine children, that is to say—can never be legitimised.

Nearly every man present told the story of his misfortunes. It was amusing to look at the body of women who were collected round the door of the judge's chamber whilst these confidences were being exchanged. Their faces said as plain as words that nothing that had happened to any one of us was anything more than we had most richly deserved. They seemed to applaud the stories of perfidy that were being told. It was all very sad. I suppose that every one of these people had married, hoping to be happy, and this is what their dreams had led them to. Many of the women looked as if they would like nothing better than to cry and to have someone to comfort them lovingly. They seemed too weak to face the fight in which they were engaged. I noticed many under-lips which quivered, which had that look which the lips of women have who have suffered much and have cried often. Even the men inspired one with pity—at least some of them did.

I accompanied my friend about six weeks later to the same place. On this occasion his wife had been summoned to meet him and to present herself *en conciliation* before the judge—that is to say, the wife was invited to listen to the judge's attempts to reconcile her to her husband. She did not put in an appearance, and my friend's interview with the judge was not much longer than on the previous occasion. In most cases the husband or wife who was being proceeded against defaulted. However, one woman had brought her lover with her, and her husband had also put in an appearance, and while we were waiting to be called before the judge we were highly diverted by the way in which this woman abused her husband. I much admired his patience. She patted the lover's cheek before us all and said: "This is my little Jules, the little darling whom I love." Jules, who was a fat, middle-aged man, looked vastly uncomfortable. As for the husband he simply smiled and shrugged his shoulders. The wife grew angrier and angrier, while the usher, the *garde de Paris* and the crowd of suitors roared with laughter at her sallies.

When this couple were called into the judge's room —Jules, of course, remaining outside—a rush was made for a side door, leading from the judicial *cabinet* into a waiting-room. It appeared that one could here listen to what was going on in the room and, as one man said, "We ought to hear something very funny when that young woman begins to talk." I saw a number of men with their ears pressed to the panel of this door, on whose faces eager expectation was depicted. But they were doomed to disappointment, for the interview between the couple and the judge was of the shortest. I suppose that the lady who was fond of Jules very emphatically refused to listen to any of the judge's arguments and that that functionary was glad to give them their *congé*. She soon appeared amongst us again, seized Jules by the arm and walked off, casting sarcastic glances at her husband, who, tranquilly following them on his way out, was rolling a cigarette.

Divorce in France is considered by some to be much too easy to obtain. Yet a large number of French citizens, both men and women, find it should be made very much easier for husbands and wives to separate when marriage has proved a failure. There is a strong movement in favour of an entire reform of the marriage and divorce laws. For the same people find that the French law makes it too difficult for people to marry. The tendency is, of course, in the direction of a total abolition of marriage, of that free love union which has so many partisans in France already. Many distinguished men have openly shown their approval of the *union libre.*

One great savant gave his two daughters to their lovers with no other marriage rites than the words, "Go, my children, I have united you," which he pronounced as he sent them off to their respective homes. The women later on took care to legalise their unions, but the fact remains that here was a father, a man of the highest scientific attainments and of universal reputation, who calmly consigned his daughters to a life of free love in defiance of the social prejudices accumulated by ages. There are many of his way of thinking in Paris to-day, and the number is gradually growing; now that religious instruction has been done away with in the schools, it is probable that an immense increase of irregular unions will take place. What has restrained most women so far has been the teachings of Monsieur le Curé and the fear of the confessional, that "dust-bin of the soul," as Rochefort once called it.

One wonders how the children will be protected under the new order of things. I think that the Frenchwomen can be very well left to look after themselves. In France it is the women who rule, and it is right that it should be so, considering their physical and intellectual superiority. The Frenchman is so well aware that his wife is more sensible than he is, and his confidence in her is so entire, that it is almost an unvarying rule that the French *ouvrier* or *employé* hands over to his wife his entire wages. The wife in the vast majority of French households has the income of the household under her management. It is she who pays the rent, who dresses the husband and the children, and who carries the savings to the bank. As to the husband he contents himself with the very small allowance of pocket-money which the woman grants him. I have known workmen earning from two to three pounds a week who have been well satisfied with a weekly tenpence for their tobacco and the debauch of a visit to the *café* on Sunday afternoon. A Frenchwoman would not understand those jokes which one sees constantly in the English papers, the point of which is the efforts made by the women to obtain from their husbands some new article of dress, a frock or a hat. If a Frenchwoman needs a new dress or a new hat she buys it out of the household purse—that is to say, if she thinks that the expense can be afforded. She would not dream it her duty to ask her husband's permission to effect the purchase. It is one of the things which go without saying, that the wife should dress as well as the *ménage* can possibly afford.

The good housewifery of the Frenchwoman is indeed one of her most admirable qualities. Abroad she does not get as much credit in this respect as is her due. At the same time one often hears comparisons drawn between French and English women of the working-classes, in favour of the French, which are decidedly most unfair to our poor lasses. The Frenchwoman has got the climate on her side. She does not, as a general rule, have to contend with the greasy, sooty atmosphere of our English towns, which makes all the poor Englishwoman's efforts to keep the "home" clean so hopeless. And again, the Frenchwoman can dress her folk in cottons, which wash. In England even the poor have to dress in woollens, or shoddy substitutes for the same, things that won't wash, become foul very soon, and remain so. It is not fair to say that because the man in the cotton blouse is clean, while his comrade in the shoddy coat is malodorous and filthy, that the wife of the former must be a decent woman and the wife of the latter a disgraceful slut. It's a question of climate. The colder the country the filthier the clothes of the poor. I remember that when I was crossing steerage to New York there were some fellows down in the hold with me who wore sheepskins, with the wool outside, of which the odour haunts me still. Illingworth's Corner in Bradford is violets to that smell. For odours can haunt one even as tunes. One morning in my luxurious apartment in the Hotel Bristol in Warsaw I was suddenly taken frightfully ill with nausea. The recollection of a visit the day before to the awful Trefna Jatka, a tenement house occupied by over one thousand families of very poor Jews, and of the dreadful smells in many of the rooms which I had entered, had suddenly swept over me. I thought that this was a sign of particular sensitiveness on my part, and was feeling rather proud of my delicacy of feeling, when Mr Whitehead, the manager of a big lace factory in the Polish capital, told me that after a walk down the Jewish quarter in Lublin, at the end of which he had been taken ill, he was seized every day for three weeks with a violent fit of vomiting when he recalled his sensations in that awful ghetto. This, by the way, *en passant*, may illustrate the shameful treatment to which the Jews are subjected in the Russian Empire.

Another reason why the Frenchwoman is better able to manage than her English sister of the working-classes is that she and her husband do not have to pay such extortionate rents as our poor workpeople do in England. In England the landlord takes rarely less than a fourth, and often as much as half, the unskilled labourer's wages.

CHAPTER III

French Frugalities—Parsimony and Pills—A Gift Ex-Coupon—Hereditary Instinct—My Friend Mignon and the Basque Peasant Woman—Sugar a Luxury—Beetroot and Brandy—*Bonbons Anglais*—A Breton Grocery—Twisting Paper Bags—Alcoholism in Brittany—The Three Barrels—"Grande Fine Champagne"—*À la Mode de Bretagne*—*Chez* Jules Massenet—Absinthe and Absinthism—Cider and Lunacy—In a "Normandy Inn"—"Strangling Parrots"—A Waif of the "Quartier"—Mademoiselle Marguerite—How she "Made an End"

No doubt one reason, and the principal reason, why the Frenchman allows his wife to have the management of the household budget is that he knows that economy is the essential characteristic of the fair sex in his country. Indeed it is so. To some extent, perhaps, the Frenchwoman carries her practice of this housewifely virtue too far, and on the principle that there is no such thing as excessive frugality—*qu'il n'y a pas de petites économies*—borders at times on avarice. I have eaten some really nasty soups in many French households over which ladies presided who had allowed their ruling passion thus to develop morbidly, and I remember once meeting the wife of a colonial officer who nearly killed herself by *une petite économie* which would have been worthy of Harpagon himself. The colonial, having returned home with a touch of malarial fever, had invested in a large case of pills advertised as a specific for his ailment. When he went back to the colonies he forgot to take the case with him. So his wife, who could not bear the thought of money having been spent for nothing, and desiring value in exchange, began taking the pills herself, although there was nothing the matter with her, and continued doing so until, as a result, she became very ill and had to send for the family doctor, who immediately impounded the pills and suppressed the cause of her disorder.

I once also witnessed in a small French household an act which struck me as rather mean. An old lady who felt her last hour approaching requested the family to present then and there to her faithful maid-servant, in lieu of legacy, a Russian bond. The niece fetched the bond, and was just handing it over to the weeping Julie when a thought occurred to her, and producing a small pair of nail-scissors she first carefully cut off the coupon for the next half-year's interest, which she placed in her pocket. Then she executed the wishes of her dying aunt, who had watched this scene without disapproval. *Il n'y a pas de petites économies.*

One has to remember that until the French Revolution the French people lived in extreme penury. The French proletarian and *bourgeois* have an instinctive respect for money and money's worth. For centuries they were at constant war with hunger, and any waste appears to their subliminary conscience a crime, or an act of madness. Thousands of French people —I might almost write hundreds of thousands—for instance, still look upon salt as a luxury to be husbanded with the greatest economy, a tradition from the pre-Revolutionary days, and it is by no means only misers like Balzac's Pére Grandet who consider sugar an article not of daily consumption, but a treat, a *régale*, a dainty.

I remember once hearing myself violently abused in a tongue which I did not understand, down in a Basque village, by an old peasant woman, who had seen me giving sugar by the handful to a dear friend of mine, a pet donkey named Mignon, who was one of the nicest companions, as well as the most intelligent, whom I have ever fallen in with. Mignon was very fond of sugar. He used to follow me to the little *café* on the public square at Cap Breton, where we were living together, push the door open with his nose, and going the rounds of the tables rob the *consommateurs* of the lumps of sugar with which they proposed to edulcorate their absinthes. Whenever we went out together for walks in the pine forests I carried a provision with me, and as often as Mignon felt he could do with a bit he had the most explicit way of letting me know. On that day I was spoiling him. Perhaps it was that humanity had appeared to me more than usually in that light which makes me prefer the society of animals—anyway Mignon had ingurgitated nearly half-a-pound of sugar. Suddenly a torrent of angrily spoken words assailed my ears, and turning round I saw by the roadside an old woman, who was shaking her fist at me while pouring out in the raucous Basque tongue comment and criticism on the scene before her, which most obviously were not complimentary.

It appeared that she was saying that it was a criminal act on my part to be giving sugar to a donkey when she herself was never able to have so much as one lump wherewith to sweeten her coffee. Readers of Zola will remember how the peasants in Beauce look upon sugar, and how it is a locution of theirs to express great contentment: "I have sweetened my coffee twice." In some parts of France, or rather amongst some French people of the poorer kind (though not of the poorest), a habit still exists which to English people may seem disgusting, and which dates from the period when sugar was such a great luxury that at a farmhouse feast a large lump of the precious product used to be hung up by a piece of string over the table, so that each guest might sweeten his mouth before imbibing his drink. Nowadays one sees people who never think of putting a lump of sugar into their cup. They put it into their mouths and let the fluid pass through it down their throats. It lasts longer and gives—so it would appear—more satisfaction.

There is a superstitious regard in France for sugar, that is because it was so expensive. A thing so costly must according to the popular idea have many virtues, because money or money's worth necessarily implies the superior qualities, and not in epitaphs alone. A real medicinal or therapeutic value is still attributed to it amongst the French. They consider that plain water is a dangerous drink, whose nocive qualities can only be overcome by the addition of a lump of sugar. The indispensable furniture of the *table de nuit*—that is to say, its exterior garnish—is the *verre d'eau sucrée*, a bottle of water, a glass and a small sugar-bowl. Sometimes a little phial of orange-flower water is added. Here is refreshment for the night, and in case of indigestion or insomnia a sovereign specific. The confirmed absinthe drinker deludes himself, and tries to impress on others, that the lump of sugar which he dissolves in his poison counteracts any evil effects of the alcohol or the lethal essences of which the drink is compounded, and here again is exemplified the hereditary superstition. I expect that the old Basque woman who saw me treating Mignon looked upon my extravagance as an act of real sacrilege, and that the *odium theologicum* gave such extraordinary fire to her indignation.

Sugar is still very expensive in France, and that may be wondered at seeing how plentiful is the beetroot, from which it is made. But industry has found for the beet a more lucrative application. It is from this root that the bulk of the cognac is distilled which is drunk in France and which is exported abroad as the perfumed distillation of the grape. The nasty fluid which oozes forth from the beetroot press on its way to the stills is technically known as *le phlégme*, which aptly describes its appearance. The first distillation is known as *les mauvaises odeurs* (the bad smells), and this is used in one stage for the manufacture of absinthe and fancy liqueurs, while the residue is employed in the preparation of those acidulated drops which are known to commerce as *bonbons Anglais* (English drops). The raw spirit which finally emerges from the still, coloured with burnt sugar, diluted with water and flavoured with certain essences and ethers, is shipped to the Charente, and returns on the markets of the world as commercial cognac. It is invoiced to the retailers at threepence a quart, and is drunk throughout France by thousands of quarts daily. The consumer pays from one and threepence the quart upwards, according to the amount of water which has been added, the place where it is sold, the bottle which contains it and the label which garnishes the bottle.

I was once living in lodgings in St Malo, over a grocer's shop, which was kept by an excellent woman, a Madame Gloux, who may hereafter figure in my humble memoirs. As time hung very heavy on my hands, I often used to go down into the *épicerie*, to talk with the *épiciére* and watch the customers. It was a small shop, which catered rather to the wants of the working population. During my visits to Madame Gloux's shop I got an insight into the way of living of these classes in a Brittany port. French workpeople seem to have as great a liking for sharp, acid vinegar and strongly flavoured edibles as our own proletarian. Pickles and strong cheese are the staple articles of food of hundreds of thousands of English men and women and, I am sorry to say, of English children also. And it's the same in France. I suppose the more pungent the flavour of the "kitchen"—as the Scotch call it—the further it goes in helping down that daily bread by which alone these men and women, at least, have to live. I used to see strong coal-heavers from the quays fetching their midday meal. They would ask for a pickled herring "with plenty of vinegar," and the grocery woman used to wrap it up, herring, vinegar and all, in a piece of brown paper.

It was, by the way, here that I learned the knack of twisting those little paper cones—*cornets*—which grocers use as bags for small purchases. It seems easy enough until you try it, and then one either knows how to do it or one does not. And the thing is so much a knack, a trade trick, that a certain Parisian detective used to use it as a test. It was his duty to scour Paris at night with the patrols for homeless vagabonds and to examine these after their arrest so as to weed out those who had a trade or profession from the beggars and thieves. Now in France it is almost as usual for a vagabond, when asked to define his social status, to describe himself as a grocer's assistant as in England it is for the loafer who gets into trouble to style himself a journalist. "I have an unfailing means of assuring myself"—so the detective, the great Rossignol himself, told me—"whether my man really is a grocer's assistant out of work or not. I give him a page out of my note-book and I say to him: 'Twist a bag.' If he has ever worked in a grocery he turns the cone in the twinkling of the eye, and I set him free. But the impostor hesitates, blunders, fails, and him I send off to the central lock-up."

I used to observe the extraordinary amount of drinking that goes on in Brittany, especially amongst the women. All day long little girls and boys came running in on errands from their parents. A frequent order would be "One sou's worth of sugar, one sou's worth of coffee, and"— putting down a half-franc piece—"fourpenceworth of brandy." There was a little mite of a girl, with a face as serious as that of a very old woman of the world, who used to come into the shop, and slowly pull up her little skirt, then dive into some recess of her garments and produce a pint bottle. "I desire," she used to say, "for ten sous, cognac brandy, and if you please, madame, mother says that it must be better than the last, which appeared to have been too liberally baptised. Otherwise I shall have to go elsewhere."

There were three qualities of cognac on draught in that shop, and the demand for them was so constant that the principal article of furniture in the shop was three large hogsheads of polished wood, from which the brandy was drawn by a tap. The qualities were "Cognac Ordinaire," "Cognac Superieur," and "Fine Champagne." The spirits were the same in each, the beetroot brandy, but the amount of added water varied. "The Cognac Ordinaire" was spirits watered down to 30 % of alcohol, the "Superieur" contained 10 % more and the "Grande Fine" was about half pure spirits. We used to prepare the qualities after dark, when the shutters were up. For the "Cognac Ordinaire" we employed a length of hose-pipe. The "Fine Champagne" was retailed at about 2s. 6d. the quart, though the same stuff put up in bottles with elegant labels fetched from sailors on the spree, or butlers from yachts in the harbour, as much as five, or even eight, shillings. As a matter of fact this "Grande Fine," although *bouquet* was lacking to it, and esters and ethers were absent, would not be any more injurious to the system than cognac manufactured from the juice of the grape. Fermentation (which is in its way a revolution), like a revolution, is a leveller, and reduces to the same plane the imperial and purple juice of the grape and the greasy scum of the pressed beetroot. Alcohol, we all know, is the excremental exudation of infusoria, and in the latrines social distinctions cease. There was recently experimented in a French laboratory the production of an alcohol for consumption out of that *matière première* which of all products is the most primary of all. It would not be any more injurious to health, if consumed, than that exquisite liqueur which Jules Massenet once served me at his table, a "Grande Fine" which had been in bottle in his family since the days of the French Revolution, and of which a Frenchman present said that it slid down his throat like the Almighty in a pair of velvet trousers.

Excellent grape-juice brandy can, of course, be had in France for those who care to pay a proper price, and stocks are to be found in unexpected places. For instance some months ago a party of American motorists drew up at a small hotel in Vernon in Normandy. They were dying for "a drink," and, though they expected to get very bad cognac at this unpretending establishment, they ordered brandies.

"Say, this is bully," was the general comment, and when the party got to Paris, and had sampled the "Grandes Fines" in the various first-class houses in the capital, they came to the conclusion that the Vernon brandy was better than anything they had sampled. So they wrote to the proprietor offering him any price per bottle that he liked to ask, and undertook to take his whole stock, if he would part with it. To this letter the worthy Norman innkeeper wrote back: "If you like my brandy, you must come to my house to drink it. We only sell it to customers to be consumed on the premises, in our hotel."

"Well, this is the limit," was the remark of the would-be buyers. They had at last found that there are some things in France—"Grande Fine" included—which money cannot buy. The landlord was, of course, acting as a shrewd business man. His "Grande Fine" was the finest advertisement that his house could possess, and he would have been unwise to part with his stock.

One never knows where good liquor may be stored. I once had a friend in Paris, Mr Westcott, who at that time was correspondent of *The Standard*, who informed me one day that he knew several places in Paris where the finest old bottled stout could be procured. This was at a number of small *marchands de vins*, who had stocked the porter years previously, but had never had any call for it. My friend told me that he was lunching every day at one of these wineshops and was gradually working his way through the fine stock of really delicious stout.

The reason why, in the form of absinthe, the juice of the beet, the *mauvaises odeurs* which are first distilled off that viscous fluid which the brandy-makers described as *le phlégme*, is so much more injurious to health, is first of all because a glass of absinthe contains a far greater proportion of pure spirit than brandy, and again because the colouring and flavouring of this liquor are obtained by the addition of most injurious substances. One is constantly reading in the papers that the French Government is going to put a stop to the sale and manufacture of absinthe in France, but nobody who knows how governments are run is for one moment the dupe of these lying and hypocritical promises. The French tapster is the great electoral agent and his business must not be interfered with. Again, strong drink keeps the proletarian electorate in that state of intellectual servitude which is the guarantee of their subjection, and then again financial considerations are not lacking why this huge industry should not be killed. Anyone who is interested in the systematic poisoning and degradation of a fine race should read the dreadful report published in 1902 by Doctor Laborde on the subject of the *cordials*, *liqueurs* and *aperitifs* in general, and of absinthe in particular, which are consumed in such huge and increasing quantities by the French nation. I remember hoping at the time that this report, ghastly reading as it is, would stimulate on the one hand repressive legislation and on the other would incite the public to prudence. That was six years ago. Since then much water has flowed under the bridges, and a river as formidable of poisonous fluids down the throats of the people. The fact is that the French have been drinking absinthe, *amers*, and all their other infernal concoctions for the past fifty years and the resulting object lessons have been such that there is not a drinker of *aperitifs* in the republic who does not know quite as much as Doctor Laborde and the whole Parliamentary Commission on Alcoholism could tell him as to the dangers he incurs by his indulgence.

Of all these nasty mixtures, absinthe is undoubtedly the most dangerous. It was to the introduction of the absinthe habit that Alphonse Daudet used to attribute the alarming spread of alcoholism in France.

"This habit," he often repeated to me, "was acquired by our soldiers in Algeria and Tunisia during our wars there, and was by them brought back to France. Before those wars we were a very sober people. In the South especially, an intemperate man was altogether an exception. We used to boast that we were born drunk, that is to say intoxicated with the light and warmth of our sun, and so stood in no need of alcoholic stimulants. But all that, *helas*, is changed now."

Absinthe is one of the strongest alcoholic drinks compounded. Its percentage of pure alcohol is 90 %, so that the drinker who has accustomed his palate to this fiery mixture will necessarily need to absorb unreasonable quantities of other spirits if he is to obtain the same effect. The ordinary brandy of French commerce, as I have pointed out above, contains, for instance, from 30 % to 35 % of pure alcohol. Therefore one tumblerful of pure, undiluted cognac will be required by the absinthe drinker as a substitute for his diluted tumblerful of absinthe. It is moreover an insidious drink, the habit of consuming it grows upon its victim, who sooner or later has to abdicate all will power in the control of his passion. Dr Laborde attributed its especial danger to the various essences which are added to the alcohol to give the liqueur its peculiar colour and flavour. Of these essence of absinthe, essence of china-anise and tincture of benjamin are the principal. By his declaration the reporter put himself on the side of those doctors who diagnose a special malady called absinthism as the result of the absinthe habit, as opposed to those who classify it with the hundred and one evil results of alcoholism. As a matter of fact, one has observed the usual effects of absinthism, the hoarse, guttural absinthe voice, the wandering, glazed absinthe eye, the cold and clammy hand, which seems to emerge from swathing cloths, as well as all the accidents of which these symptoms are the forerunners, in people who have never drunk a glass of absinthe in their lives. Various *amers*, or bitters, even the supposed harmless *vermouth*, will, in due course, if taken to excess, conduct their man to epilepsy, paralysis and death. Absinthe gets in its work more speedily, because it is the more insidious drink, and the *absintheur* consumes, therefore, a vastly larger quantity of alcohol than other drinkers.

I think that it is the alcohol that does it, because I know that people who drink enough cider can eventually land themselves in the same state of physical and mental wreck as even the most hardened votaries of that " green goddess " which caused such a breakdown in Alfred de Musset.

" You will be very busy this year," was a remark recently made by the prefect of one of the departments in Brittany, speaking to the head doctor of the departmental lunatic asylum. "Apples are very plentiful and cider is cheap."

However, the fact remains that fourteen distinct poisons enter into the composition of good absinthe, such as is retailed at the best *cafés*. Of what the stuff is made which is sold in the popular bars in Paris and the provinces at 1½d. the glass one shudders to think. I have heard that in the distilleries the workers take delight in throwing filth into the pots in which *la verte* is being manufactured, on the principle that nothing is too dirty for people with such a dirty habit as that of drinking absinthe. All that I know of it is that if you plunge a piece of iron wire into the liquor and leave it there for twenty-four hours you will find it, under the microscope, glittering with tiny specks of copper. The copper is used to produce the characteristic green colour. I have seen men, aye and women too, drink fifteen "goes" of this mixture in the early morning on empty stomachs. "Killing the worm," they call it, or "strangling a parrot." The absinthe woman is that dreadful female who only emerges from her nameless lairs in times of popular disturbance, gaunt, haggard, a Fury of death and destruction.

Whenever such a report is issued as that of Doctor Laborde, one hopes and hopes that it will give the French nation pause. But one is ever disappointed, and how can parliamentary yellow books achieve what the most horrible object lessons fail to accomplish? One reads every day of terrible things which have befallen absinthe drinkers. A few months ago the case of a man was reported who, whilst stirring his tenth "blue" at a *marchand de vins*, suddenly went blind, a case which I took pains to authenticate. In a police station in Paris not very long ago there were brought in from the streets in one day six prisoners so demented from absinthe drinking that they had all to be sent to the lunatic asylum. Absintheurs drop down dead in the streets of apoplexy, cerebral congestion and heart failure, every day that dawns red over Paris. What the green goddess did for several well-known men in French literature is a matter of history. Yet merrily the "strangling of parrots" goes on and the jest about "taking a blue" is found as pleasant as ever.

The habit is a rooted one in France. Drive through Paris or any other French town at the hours of eleven and six and see the city flecked with leprous spots. These are the "green hours" (*l'heure verte*), when the moderate absintheurs indulge. As for the absinthe drunkards, all their waking hours are green, and the first parrot is strangled the moment they emerge from coma in the morning. In the very buffet of the Chamber of Deputies whilst the absinthe habit and its ravages are being eloquently discussed from the benches, one can see many a parrot in the process of strangulation.

Last year in an inn in Normandy, where I had gone to watch the spring adorn the apple-trees, I saw an Englishman drink himself into epilepsy on absinthe. He took one month to effect this, and his drink bill fell just short of a five-pound note. Doubtless when he arrived at the inn he had previously undergone considerable alcoholic preparation, but that month's steady absinthing finished the work. It was just after luncheon one morning. "I think I must have an absinthe," he said. Then suddenly he gave a cry, grimaced and fell on the floor in a fit. It behoved me as his countryman to sit up at nights with him during his illness, and the doctor's special recommendation to me was to keep all cutlery and other mischievous instruments out of his reach. He won back to life again, but he was hardly out and about before he was strangling parrots once more, and this time he took the stuff neat. Absinthe renders people mad and bad. The murderer Soleilland, the monster whom Monsieur Fallières thought fit to pardon (perhaps from consideration for the guillotine), was a confirmed drinker, and so, it is computed, are more than half the men who people the *bagnios* of Cayenne. I have heard of men who have worked themselves up to the commission of some dreadful deed by imbibing the stuff, which fires the blood and deadens the power of reasoning. And I know also of a poor little waif of a girl who went to absinthe to help her cast off the intolerable burden of her shame and suffering. In the days when I used to go to the *cafés* in the Latin Quarter, I often noticed a girl of the town, amongst the crowd of unhappy women who throng those establishments. She had beautiful grey eyes, a Madonna face and a modest demeanour. She looked as though she came of a good family and had only been driven by fatality into what the French call *faire la vie* (living life)—perhaps because it is certain death. She was a pretty, ladylike girl, whose sad face it gave me pleasure to look at, and I suppose that she felt my sympathy with her, because whenever she passed my table she used to smile and say: "Bonjour, Monsieur Robert." As often I used to answer her: "Bonjour, Mademoiselle Marguerite." One day it occurred to me that I had not seen the grey eyes of the Madonna-like face for a long while, and I asked about Mademoiselle

Marguerite. Then I heard that she was dead, had been dead some time. They had fished her out of the Seine by the Pont-Neuf. "Margot was never made for our life," said my informant, "and she wasn't a *poseuse* either. *On naquit au metier.* She hated it. She was made to be a nursery-governess or to marry a clerk. She had often said that she would not bear it very much longer. Well, about a month ago we had all been spending the night, *faisant la noce*" (on the spree), "down at Baratte's at the Halles" (Central Markets), "and at seven o'clock in the morning Margot said she had enough and was going home. She walked straight back to her hotel and asked her landlady if the jewels she was wearing—a ring, a bracelet, a watch and so on—would cover the amount of what she owed, and whether the woman would give her ten francs besides. Of course the woman said yes—Margot's jewels were worth a great deal more than that—and the girl took them off and poured them into the old hag's hands and then went off with the two five-franc pieces chinking in her palm. She went off towards the Pont Neuf down the Rue Dauphine and stopped at every drink-shop on the way. She never used to drink, but she drank that day. She drank at every shop she passed, neat absinthe, until she had spent the last sou of her ten francs. By that time she had reached the river, then she ran down the steps behind the statue of Henri IV. and . . . it was three weeks before Margot was heard of again. I was fetched to the Morgue to identify her. It was a difficult job, because her face had been badly disfigured . . . some paddle-steamer, *sans doute.*"

CHAPTER IV

The Hypersensitiveness of Marguerite—"La Belle F——"—Marriage in France—Women who object to marry—As in Jamaica—"Make an honest Man of me"—Divorce *à l'aimable*—The Cost in France—Marriage as a Business Proposition—A Matter-of-fact Young Man—"No Dowry, no Son-in-law"—A happy Sequel—A Normandy Wooing—Alphonsine's Suitor—The Bridegroom's Expectations—A successful Alliance—An Algerian Boarding-house Keeper—"With or without Bulbul"—International Marriages—Dumas and the Suffragettes—Marie-Louise and her Spouses—Dumas' Misadventure—His Diplomacy

Poor little Marguerite with the grey eyes must have been a very sensitive girl, because in France there is little of that feeling of shame which overwhelms women who are not virtuous in other countries. The French *cocotte* sees no disgrace at all in her trade, and she is encouraged in her opinion by the weight of public opinion. In England a girl who goes that way very probably, and rightly so, gives up all hope of marrying and settling down. In France it is of common occurrence for such a woman to marry and become an excellent member of society. When I first went to Paris there used to be pointed out to me, at receptions in the best society, a very distinguished-looking lady, who was the wife of a great painter, and I was told that that was that "La Belle F——." Well, she certainly was beautiful, and as I saw her everywhere I gathered that she had conquered her admission to Parisian society. And so it was, thanks to her husband's talent and fame. The position of woman is quite different in France. In England women themselves are accustomed to say that in marrying them their husbands have conferred upon them the highest honour they are capable of bestowing. A Frenchwoman would laugh in her husband's face if he ventured to say anything so foolish. Marriage in France is a business contract in which the woman brings at least as much as the man. And very often in cases of free union, where there is no marriage between the spouses, the reason is that the woman will not consent to bind herself.

I know a very worthy French writer who for years past has been urging madame to make their union a regular, legitimate one by coming with him before the registrar. He says that were it only for the sake of their children she ought to do so, to make an "honest man" of their father. "You have compromised me," he urges, "and it's your duty to marry me." She however refuses. She says that as long as he behaves himself she will never desert him, but she cannot see her way clear to marry him.

Strangely enough such is exactly the feeling also of the majority of the negresses in Jamaica. They have no objection whatever to live in *union libre* with a man, and to allow him to become the father of their numerous progeny, but, however ardently he may woo, they will rarely marry him. They like their liberty, and the hold it gives them over monsieur to be able to leave him at any time when the fancy to do so may take them.

There are a great many women in France like her who do not see anything dishonourable in an irregular union, and nowadays, when divorce is easily obtained, the marriage ceremony is not a very binding one. Divorce, by the way, is one of those things which they do very differently in France. Not very long ago a friend of mine asked me to lunch and, added he, "You will meet my wife." I said, "I hope so," and then he reminded me that he was living separated from that lady and that divorce proceedings were in progress between them. "But," said he, "we remain very good friends, and she often comes to see me, and she is to be at this luncheon."

The *déjeuner* was a most cordial one, and the couple showed signs of great mutual affection. After the coffee had been put on the table the wife got up and went and kissed her husband, and when he called her "angel" she called him "darling." But she remained firm in her decision not to return home unless he would agree to certain conditions which he could not consent to. So between their words of endearment came discussions about legal proceedings. "My *avoué* will urge this," said the husband. "Oh, but my lawyer will say that," answered the wife. There was something pathetic in this familiar meal which united once more in domestic bonds two people who were about to separate for ever. After the *pousse-café* and that final glass of liqueur which the French call the *coup de pied au derrière* (the kick behind), the lady took her departure. Her husband escorted her to her omnibus, and there took leave of her. I am glad to say that in this case the difference was finally adjusted and the *avoués* lost a profitable case.

A Parisian *avoué* usually charges one thousand francs for his share of the work, for which sum he carries the case up to the final judgment, paying court fees, subpœnas and so forth. He usually asks for half the money in advance, on the French theory of jurisprudence that the first document in any *dossier* must be the suitor's cheque or banknote. Besides the *avoué* there is the advocate to be paid—the barrister, that is to say, who makes his appearance before the court and applies for judgment. There is no fixed tariff for his services. He deals directly with his client and asks as much as he thinks the client can or will pay. He usually fixes twenty pounds as his fee, and he also usually asks for it in advance. It is a wise precaution, for the etiquette of the French bar is even stricter than that which regulates the conduct of English barristers. No *avocat* may apply for payment in writing—his services by a polite fiction are supposed to be gratuitous. He is strictly forbidden to put his name up over his office door. I have heard of the disbarment of a French barrister because he nailed his visiting card—on which he was described as *Avocat à la Cour d'Appel*—outside his apartment. He may not engage in any kind of trade and he may not sign a promissory note.

It is a mistake to think that marriages which are entered upon on both sides as a commercial transaction must necessarily be unhappy. The contrary is the case. They are usually very much more successful than what are called love matches.

I know a very happy couple in Paris over whose union the coldest business spirit presided. The girl's father had promised to give a dowry of forty thousand francs in cash on the eve of the wedding. When that date came the bridegroom called to receive the funds. "I am sorry to say, *mon gendre* (son-in-law)," said the father, "that I am not quite able to keep my promise. But if twenty thousand francs to-day and the balance in a promissory note at three months. . . . You see, son-in-law——" "Don't son-in-law me," said the young man, putting on his hat. "If the dowry isn't ready, I am not ready either. The cash I want. I have no use for your promissory notes." "But surely," said the father, "you don't mean to break off the marriage? The religious service is arranged for, the carriages are ordered and a banquet at ten francs a head including wine has been bespoken at the Porte Maillot." "It is impossible for me to enter into these details," said the bridegroom. "I am here to receive forty thousand francs *de bonne galette*. You offer me paper. I have no use for your promissory notes. Therefore the contract is broken and I am off. You can tell Monsieur le Curé that there won't be a wedding to-morrow, and as to the carriages and banquet. . . . Well, that is your affair, not mine. Many kind things to Celestine. I am off."

The father tried to persuade him to change his mind, but it was useless. The utmost that he would consent to was to wait a fortnight for the production of the funds. At the end of the fortnight the father-in-law was able to offer only thirty thousand francs in cash and again proposed a draft at three months for the balance. This proposal was indignantly rejected by the lover of Celestine, who went off, slamming the door. He said that he was a business man and liked things to be done in a businesslike way. Another delay ensued, although the prospective son-in-law declared that he had other arrangements in view. One may fancy that in his heart of hearts he had a tenderness for the fair Celestine. However, a month later the father was able to pay over the sixteen hundred pounds, and the wedding twice postponed finally was celebrated. The young man threw himself life and soul into the festivities, was gallant and *empressé*, and delighted everybody present. He danced with the greatest grace and *abandon*, and touched the heart of every woman there, from that of his mother-in-law downwards, by his affectionate attentions to his bride. Well, this marriage has turned out one of the happiest unions that I know of in Paris. Not very long ago I saw Celestine and her husband walking in the Champs Elysées with their children. The man was addressing his wife as *pou-poule*, and was wheeling a perambulator with the baby.

Once when I was staying in an inn in Normandy the hostess came up to my table while I was at lunch and said that she knew I should be glad to hear that her daughter was engaged to be married. She then told me how the engagement had come about.

"Some days ago," she said, "an individual came into the *café* and took a *vermouth grenadine*. As he was a stranger I looked at him and I noticed that he kept peering about the room as though taking stock of the furniture and so on. After a while he asked me if I were Madame T——, and when I said that I was she, and at his service, he said, 'I understand, madame, that you have two daughters of a marriageable age.' I said, 'You are mistaken, monsieur, my eldest daughter has already been married some months. Her husband is a young man in a big linen-drapery in Paris.' He said, 'Oh, very well, but then you still have one daughter whom a man could marry?' I said, 'Yes,' and then he said, 'My name is So-and-so, and I keep a little grocer's shop in Dieppe. I want to marry and settle down and I want a woman about the house, also to help me with the shop. I was round here a few months ago and I noticed a girl who seemed just my sort. So I made inquiries and I have come over to say that if the young woman has no other views, and I might suit her, I should be very happy to enter into an alliance with your family. By the way, what is the young lady's name?' I told him, and I added that I was much flattered by so honourable a proposal, but that, of course, I must speak with Alphonsine. 'Do that,' he said, 'while I finish my *vermouth grenadine.*' So whilst he was drinking his *consommation* I went upstairs. Alphonsine had a headache and was lying down. I went up to her and I said, 'Alphonsine, there is a young man downstairs who has come to ask for your hand.' 'Oh! tell him to go to ——,' said Alphonsine, only her expression was considerably more coarse. I said that that was not the way to treat a man who came with a polite proposal, and at last I got her to get up and come downstairs. The young man was very polite, and offered us both coffee with little glasses. After a while I left them together and Alphonsine and he discussed matters. Since then he has been coming here pretty regularly paying court, and now the marriage is settled, and this is to ask you to honour us with your presence on the occasion."

Some days later I saw the prospective bridegroom. He became confidential and he said: "Maybe I am doing a wise thing, maybe not. I think the girl is straight, or at anyrate that she is going straight now. Of course I know that virgins are rare, very rare, and I don't expect anything of the sort. But I believe she is a hard worker and that she will suit me."

The marriage duly came off, with all the festivities which are usual in Normandy weddings. Well, this marriage was a most successful one. The young people suited each other perfectly. Alphonsine made a splendid wife, and the pair did so well in the little grocery *café* in Dieppe that after they had been married a year they were able to take a good inn in one of the inland towns, a certain *Cheval Blanc*, where they are rapidly amassing a small fortune. They are perfectly devoted to each other and have already a large family.

These two anecdotes go to illustrate an observation I have made in life over and over again—*i.e.* that marriages over which common sense and cold business instinct preside are almost certain to be more happy than those which are initiated with palpitations of the diaphragm to the melodious notes of the nightingale. Of course, I know that nightingales may be as artificial as the sentiment which they inspire, and I remember a beautiful place at Mustapha Superieur, on the heights above Algiers, where the notes of the bird that sings by night were produced for the greater delectation of his guests by an ingenious boarding-house keeper, who felt he never could do enough for his wife's customers. The man was an English jockey who had married a Frenchwoman, whose aunt kept this delightful *pension de famille*, an old Moorish villa set in a fine old Moorish garden. The English nephew was manager of the place, and his activity was surprising and admirable. It was he himself who cooked the eggs and bacon for the breakfasts, for he declared that no Frenchwoman understood our national dish, he blacked the boots, he groomed the horse, he superintended Ali the gardener, he drove the trap, he pumped the water and helped to peel the vegetables. At times he could be seen rushing upstairs with a long spyglass with which to scan the distant horizon so as to discover the approach of any ship in which guests were either arriving or about to depart. And at night, when all had gone to bed, this devoted man, leaving his pipe and dog, would steal out into the orange groves and there would imitate in a beautiful and lifelike manner the trilling of the bulbul, which is the Moorish double of our English nightingale. When this came to my knowledge I suggested to him that musical evenings of this kind were really more than even the most exacting *pensionnaire* could claim for the money, and that his scale of charges ought to be fixed "With or without Bulbul." He was not of this opinion, for, said he, it was his bounden duty to make things as enjoyable as possible for his aunt's boarders, while he himself greatly delighted in these nocturnal warblings.

This marriage was an exception to a rule which I have observed during my residence in France—namely, that matrimonial alliances between Englishmen and Frenchwomen are not happy ones. Our little jockey simply basked in uxorious felicity. The "O-o-o-ouilliam" with which his wife addressed her husband was in itself like a bulbul note. But then William, though a jockey, had all the instincts of a gentleman, which implies, or ought to imply, a feeling of great chivalry towards women. The average English husband usually wants to dominate his French wife, *more anglico*, to keep the control of the domestic purse in his own hands, and generally to "boss the show" as he does at home. These are things which the French wife resents: a feeling of dislike for the domestic tyrant grows up within her gentle bosom and finally, when Jules or Alphonse comes along with rolling eyes and a mouth in the shape of a heart, she remembers that after all she is a Frenchwoman, that the husband is a foreigner, and . . . and she avenges

Crécy, Agincourt and Waterloo. I have seen many such cases, and the reason has always been the same—the refusal on the part of the English husband to understand the difference between the psychology of his French wife and the woman of his own race. I attribute this difference to the fact that the French were ever a domestic people, and the men stayed at home, so that the wife naturally acquired ascendancy and rule. In England, on the other hand, where the men were largely wanderers, sailors on the seas, merchantmen and soldiers in foreign lands, the home woman played but an unimportant part in their lives, and could be treated with scant consideration. Then there is also to be considered the enormous preponderance of the female sex in our islands.

It is this extraordinary preponderance of the female sex in England which, I suppose, makes the politicians so very reluctant to grant the demands of the "suffragettes." If women got their votes in England they would be able to do just what they liked, the male vote would be swamped, and that prospect, I suppose, will ever raise strong opposition to their desires. Curiously enough, in more progressive France, there has been no movement of anything like so vigorous a nature as that which is being carried on by the suffragettes in England, though, of course, the question of granting votes to women is constantly cropping up there also. One recalls the very rude answer made by Alexandre Dumas, *père,* when he was asked if he thought women could become deputies, *Est-ce-que les femmes pourraient devenir deputés?* "Yes," he answered, "if you change the last syllable of the word." *Oui, en changeant la dernière syllabe.* The remark is so rude that I will not further explain it.

Dumas, by the way, was not a moral man, and accordingly had no very great respect for women. And perhaps the natural consequence was that women had no very great respect for him. One will find that the men who have been most betrayed by women are just those who treat women as vastly their inferiors. Of these, the great Napoleon is a striking example. A great genius, a master of men, the most powerful king who ever lived, his domestic misfortunes were more numerous and more humiliating than have ever befallen the meanest man. To live to see a Neipperg preferred to him might have seemed a greater defeat than the catastrophe of Waterloo. Apropos of Neipperg I noticed the other day in a German paper the announcement of the death of the eldest son of Marie-Louise and the Austrian General who supplanted Napoleon in her affections and was consort to the Duchess of Parma. The Prince di Montenuovo (this is the Italian translation of Neipperg, or Neu Berg) died in a private lunatic asylum in Vienna. Marie-Louise, by the way, left a numerous descendance. After Neipperg she had a third husband, a Count Something, after the Count a Baron, and after the Baron there was, as Méneval tells us, another consort, by whom the former Empress of France had several daughters, who were reared in England. Which goes to prove, I think, that the most careful moral education rarely succeeds in modifying human nature. Marie-Louise was brought up with the very strictest attention to morals. Specially printed books were alone supplied to the Imperial princesses and only female animals of any kind were allowed them as pets. Yet she has left the reputation of a *bourgeoise* Messalina. I suppose the brutal initiation which she received from

Napoleon at Compiègne upset her moral balance, which she never afterwards recovered.

Dumas, as has been said, had no very great respect for women. He looked upon them in life as *Nebensache*, a by-issue, which is a common conceit with very active men. But at any rate when they gave him tit for tat he took the thing in a sportsmanlike spirit. One night when he had reached the landing of the apartment where he was living with a morganatic wife—one of the very many who embellished his existence—he heard while opening the door of the flat that scuffling and whispering and rustling which so many husbands have heard, are hearing and are likely to hear as long as matrimony remains a human institution. Dumas found the nuptial chamber in fairly good order, and received the usual specially amiable welcome from his guilty spouse. He said nothing and went to bed. After about an hour, during which he had been talking with his usual verve, he suddenly interrupted himself in what he was relating and said, "Don't you think, my dear, we might let him have his waistcoat?" So saying he put his arm under the bed, pulled out a man's vest and, going up to the window, which opened on to a balcony, threw the garment out. It was a very cold night and the balcony was covered with snow. Ten minutes later he threw out another garment, and finally he invited the man to come in. Then addressing the shivering, sneezing, frost-bitten Don Juan, who had been crouching outside on the balcony in the snow, he held out his hand to him across the woman's body and said, "My friend, let us reconcile ourselves on the public place."

It appears to be considered, by the way, very good form not to display anger under such circumstances as constitute what is called "conjugal misfortune." Victor Hugo said that when a man finds that his wife is unfaithful to him, if he be a fop he makes a noise about it, if a fool he complains and laments himself, but that the honest man leaves the woman in silence. I suppose it punishes the two adulterers much more to be laughed at and treated with contempt when taken in their treachery than it would if their victim showed anger or offered violence.

CHAPTER V

Duelling in France—The Aggrieved Party—Scholl as Arbitrator—Two Social Conventions—The Feeling in England—Jerome Napoleon and Empress Eugénie—Whistler and George Moore—George Moore in Dublin—His Objection to Flaubert—How Moore works—Literature and the Middle Class—Wordsworth's Descent—Wordsworth and Quillinan—A Poem composed under Difficulties—High Descent—The Crossing Sweeper and the King—The Irish Literary Movement—The Contemporary Club—Mr Oldham, William Butler Yeats—Syng and the King of the Blasketts—The Fenian O'Leary—Padraic Colum and the American Mæcenas—Professor Dowden and De Quincey's Proofs

WITH reference to violence, it is a curious point of the French duelling code that, if a husband under such circumstances as are referred to in the preceding chapter, strike the intruder, it is the latter and not the husband who is the aggrieved party, and who in any subsequent duel would have the choice of weapons. Especially if the violence to which his indignation carried him took the form of a box on his rival's ears. In the French *point d'honneur* the box on the ears is a far greater insult than a blow with the fist, while the height of offensive aggression is to strike your man lightly in the face with a glove. The slighter forms of assault imply contempt, chastisement, and are humiliating, the knockdown blow suggests a certain respect for your adversary.

I remember a case where a husband who had been cruelly outraged was refused the choice of weapons because he had struck his rival. The consequence was that the rival selected pistols and so got off without any punishment. The husband, when he sent him his seconds, had hoped to fight a duel with swords, and was looking forward with some satisfaction to running him through the body. There was, I remember, considerable discussion between the seconds as to who really had the choice of weapons, and the matter was finally referred to the arbitration of Monsieur Aurelien Scholl, who was the great authority in Paris on all technical points of duelling law. The case was laid before him with all the formality with which an English lawyer takes counsel's opinion, and Monsieur Aurelien Scholl certainly spent more time in thinking out the case and writing out his answers than the average barrister does over the average case. And of course Scholl's services were purely gratuitous. Scholl's decision in this case was that as "A" (the husband) had struck "B" (the lover), the latter obviously became the offended party, and had the choice of weapons. At the same time he declared that, as the right acquired by "B" was purely a technical one, every other advantage should be left to "A." In what these "advantages" consisted was not made clear.

I have often thought that the justification of the modern duel in France resides in the fact that it enables the outraged husband or lover to wipe off the stain on his honour in a gallant and gentlemanly way. That a man's honour be in any way stained by the amatory proceedings of a person of the opposite sex is purely a social convention, and so is also, of course, the vindication of a man's honour by the duello. French society says that a man is dishonoured if his wife or lady-love be unfaithful to him. It also says that a man who is dishonoured may regain his honour by crossing swords or by discharging pistols at the man who has offended him. The one theory may possibly be fully as absurd as the other, but as long as they are both held in a great nation in the forefront of civilisation it would be presumptuous of you or of me, would it not, to disregard public opinion in this respect?

We are accustomed in England to speak either with contemptuous ridicule or with severe reprobation of duelling, as it is still practised in France. Yet it is not so very, very long since the last duel was fought on English soil, whilst the fact that the duelling spirit still lingers in our midst is established by the circumstance that, although the law makes it a penal offence to challenge a person to armed combat, one recurrently hears of such challenges having been given, if not accepted. We can all remember how Mr Henry Labouchere invited an assailant, another London editor, to afford him satisfaction in Belgium; Whistler's famous challenge to George Moore has no more been forgotten than the critic-novelist's amusing refusal of this *cartel*; and quite recently the matter for humorous newspaper comment was afforded by a conflict between two parliamentary candidates in the course of which it was declared by one of the adversaries that a single combat could alone give satisfaction to his wounded honour. However, although we thus often demonstrate that the idea of duelling is not really so abhorrent as we pretend, we censure and ridicule the French for keeping the practice alive.

The vitality with which this national custom is still imbued in France is shown by the facts that it is a general one, from which no class of the population except priests and actors are excluded; that the Cabinet Minister no less readily than the boulevard journalist, who is thirsting for publicity, accepts or delivers a challenge; that whatever the consequences of a duel may be, provided the stringent regulations which order such encounters have been duly observed, the violated laws are invariably disregarded by judges and juries alike and acquittal of all concerned, even where one of the combatants has been killed, follows as a matter of course; and that public spirit is so strongly in favour of this mode of settling differences that the man who, having been challenged, declines a *cartel* on any of the grounds of civicism, humanity, respect of the law, which an Englishman would advance under similar circumstances with the fullest approval of public opinion, would be branded as a coward and excluded from society. One may recall the scathing contempt with which the Empress Eugénie replied to Prince Jerome Napoleon when the latter consulted her as to whether he ought to accept a challenge which had been sent to him: "In affairs like this, monsieur, a man of honour does not seek the advice of a woman." It was evident to her that her uncle's only motive in consulting her was in the hopes that she would tell the Emperor, who would forbid the encounter. The position of the man "who won't fight" is in France that of a pariah. He is likened to a "public spittoon"; he is spoken about as "a collector of boxes on the ear"; and he is the object of general contempt. An officer in the French army who should decline a duel pressed upon him would be immediately cashiered. So respected is the *point d'honneur* amongst French soldiers of all ranks, that it is the colonel of the regiment himself who arranges the conditions of any duel which may arise between any two of his subordinates.

George Moore answered Whistler's telegram by saying that he would as soon think of dressing up like a wild Indian and of dancing a war dance in Pall Mall as of accepting the artist's challenge. But then Moore was no longer residing in Paris. If he had been he might have decided otherwise. What a pity it would have been if the fiery Virginian had run him through. "Esther Waters" had not been written at that date, and English literature would have lost one of the finest novels in the language. It is a wonderful book, and if George Moore started his literary career by imitating the men at whose feet he had sat in Paris, the Zolas and other naturalists, he reached his apogee in a work which stands far above any realistic novel of modern life that any Frenchman has written. In his first book he shows in many ways how imbued he was with modern French literature. In writing the "Mummer's Wife" he seems to have thought in French. I remember a phrase, "Then why derange these ladies?" where, of course, he had the French word *deranger* in his mind, for he did not mean to write, "Why are you driving these ladies mad," but "Why disturb them?" Also he speaks in the same book of a "sour and deaf anger." This conveys no meaning to an Englishman. What he was thinking about was the French *une colère sourde,* which is a favourite expression of the French writers on whom he was modelling himself. Having the word *sourd* before his eyes, he first wrote down the word "sour" which resembles it in appearance and spelling, and next he translated it into "deaf." These are two illustrations of what I have advanced, and there are others in the same book. But since then, what strides! Not that he has ever entirely thrown off the French influence. "Esther Waters" in construction is distinctly modelled on "Une Vie." The *dénouement* is the same in both, in both to the afflicted woman a home-returning child brings solace. But now Moore has cast realism aside, and as under every naturalist if you scour him with sufficient energy you will find a poet and idealist, so in "The Lake" George Moore manifested this side also of his composition. When I last saw him it was just before the publication of "The Lake." I had called on him at his house in Ely Place, Dublin, and spent in his company a memorable hour. He was then girding against Flaubert, just as ten years previously he had utterly repudiated Zola. One has not forgotten that article which he wrote in *The English Illustrated Magazine* in which he prophesied that Zola would end with his "nose on the *boudin*." Which is exactly how poor Zola did end.

He was very violent about Flaubert. "I am going to tackle Flaubert next," he said to me. "I am going to let him have it. For over thirty years we have been accustomed to hear that he is one of the greatest, if not the greatest, of prose-writers, and I am going to show that he is a rotten writer, one of the rottenest of writers. I intend to recommence my articles 'Avowals' for the very purpose of exposing the delusions we have all been under with regard to Flaubert. What is that saying of his in the first pages of 'Salammbô,' something about the cry of the captives being like the *bruissement* of the war chariots? What stuff! What piffle! No, no, there are in France," he continued (I am not certain that Moore did not say: "in the world's literature"), "only two writers of prose who are worthy of the name of master and those two are Tourgenieff and Balzac. Here from every page shines forth upon the reader the light of a great intellect."

Moore then told me the story of "The Lake," and I was struck by his way of telling it. He kept saying, "So then . . . ," just like one who is telling a story to a child. The book was, as one remembers, a big success and gave the very best writing of English of which the author was capable, which is saying a very great deal. Moore of Moore Hall in Connaught is a wealthy man and can afford to spend long months over one book. Poor Gissing, by the way, used to say that six weeks was the very shortest period in which a satisfactory novel could be produced, but then Gissing lived in Grub Street. Moore can and does take his time, and works in a conscientious manner. A clever lady secretary comes to his house every morning when he is engaged on a novel, and to her he dictates about 1500 words of copy, spending the whole of the morning in this dictation. She then types this "matter" out for him, and "then," he said, "I set to work to pull it about." He uses the typed copy as rough notes for his manuscript and spends hours over each page, each line almost.

I had many talks with the author of "The Lake" during my stay in Dublin. He told me that Macmillan the publisher had informed him, demonstrating his assertion by the production of documents, that a sale of 20,000 copies is the high-water mark that any six-shilling novel ever reaches or has reached, which makes one wonder as to the veracity of the people who write advertisements for the publishers. He also told me that he was tired of living in Dublin and intended to return to Paris to live there. "There must be," he said, "some quiet street off the Faubourg St Honoré which would suit me very well." He must be greatly regretted in Dublin, where he was looked up to as a leader by all the many young men there who have literary aspirations. For the rest he was very popular, in spite of his cynical way of talking and a certain Parisianism of tone which used to shock some of his Philistine neighbours. Although the young Irish writers so esteem him, and though when he first came to Dublin he interested himself strongly in the Irish literary movement, and especially in the revival of the study of the Irish tongue, he remarked to me that he now holds that the "Irish literary movement is very much like sterilised bouillon and that it would require a main of radium to galvanise it into anything like life."

Moore remarked that nearly all writers of distinction have sprung from the middle classes. I did not agree with him. There is a good deal of the *sang azul* in the Republic of Letters. It is true that when a gentleman does take to writing as a profession, things are made very much more difficult for him than for a plebeian. Of this the case of Byron is a notable example. Byron was chiefly attacked by his "dear *confrères*" because he was a nobleman. Wordsworth commented on the unfairness of this proceeding. He said: "Here is a young poet of great promise who is being abused and discouraged simply because he is a lord." Byron only heard that Wordsworth had said this towards the end of his life and he then expressed his regret that he had attacked Wordsworth so bitterly. "If I had only known," he said, presumably with the same acuity of remorse with which we all have said those words at some time or another.

Wordsworth would instinctively feel sympathy for the noble poet, being himself of most distinguished and ancient lineage. The Wordsworths of Pennistone in Yorkshire, from whom the poet descended, were one of the oldest families in the north of England. A Wordsworth was knighted on the battlefield of Agincourt. It was doubtless to the hereditary instinct that the poet Wordsworth owed that supreme loftiness of character, that unbreakable pride, that entire confidence in himself by which in the end he won to land in spite of the thousand difficulties that were placed in his way. His pride was without limits. To this may be attributed the fact that never once during his long career, when he was struggling forward under ridicule, in poverty from failure to failure, did he betray the faintest envy of others more successful. Jealousy was alien from his nature. The very proud man does not deign to compare others with himself. On one remembered occasion, Wordsworth was heard to mutter indignantly: "What other poets?" He was leaving a house at which he had met various Parnassians, and somebody had spoken to him of himself and the "other poets."

However, on one occasion, he was glad to acknowledge the ability of a minor bard, who was his neighbour. This was Edward Quillinan, who lived at Loughrigg Holme on the Rothay. One night an order came down from Windsor to the Poet Laureate. The Queen commanded him to write an ode to celebrate the election of the Prince Consort as Chancellor of the University of Cambridge. Wordsworth, when he accepted the Laureateship, had distinctly stipulated that he should never be called upon to write poetry about state functions or royal happenings, and this had been cordially agreed to by the Prime Minister. But as Wordsworth, the Bishop of Lincoln, had shown himself greatly opposed to the election of Prince Albert, and as in consequence the Wordsworths had fallen into high disfavour with that most loyal of wives, H.M. Queen Victoria, the lady, in a feminine spirit, felt that she would like to set a Wordsworth to sing the defeat of the Wordsworth faction. The old gentleman was of course forced to obey, but he felt totally unfitted for the task. His daughter was lying dead in the house at that very hour. My mother has often told me how distressed her grandfather was. "I shall never be able to do it," he kept repeating. At last it occurred to him to send for Quillinan. Quillinan came and long into the night the two bards sat together in Wordsworth's study grinding out the unworthy ode which was afterwards printed on white satin, set to music by Haydn and sung at the official installation of the princely Chancellor. My mother says she will never forget the sight that the old gentleman presented while this collaboration was in progress. His head was bowed, he seemed in much perturbation. The Quillinan-Wordsworth composition is not, by the way, included in the poet's collected works.

With reference to high lineage, by the way, an interesting story was told the other day by Lord Stanley of Alderley to my uncle, Mr William Wordsworth, of Capri. They had been talking over together family pedigrees, and Lord Stanley related how one day, sitting in his club in London with a certain famous genealogist, Mr John Horace Round, the latter had remarked to him that all English families were so intermingled that it would be difficult to find any man or woman belonging to a race which had lived in England for a certain number of centuries who could not—did he or she know it—claim royal descent.

"I would not mind wagering," added Mr Round, pointing to a man in the street who was sweeping the road outside the club window, "that if we could trace that good man's lineage, we should find that he is descended from one of the English kings."

On leaving the club, the genealogist had the curiosity to speak to the man and to ask him his name, particulars of his birth, and so on. He learned that the man had come from Yorkshire, where his father had been an agricultural labourer. Mr Round noted down all the data, and as a pastime, as well as for the purpose of proving his contention, made inquiries into the man's family history. A friend in Yorkshire assisted, and the result of their investigations was to trace that London crossing sweeper's lineage back to Edward III. It receded through a few generations of labourers to a farmer, then up to a parson's daughter, a country squire, and so on through rising social planes to the throne of England.

All of which, of course, does not go to show that people of good descent should not be proud of it, or to deride the legitimate satisfaction that people feel who can point to a long line of honourable forebears. On the one hand such people are more likely, if only on account of their family pride, to behave properly, and on the other those who can establish that they spring from long generations of decent, well-behaved folk can justly claim a larger share of confidence from their fellow-citizens. One would naturally expect such people to be of better moral fibre, and far more likely to act honestly, than people who may have sprung from generations of people of whose characters no record has been left or is obtainable. In Paris once I made the acquaintance of a young duke, a rich, handsome, elegant man, of most charming manners and disposition. His title sounded rather exotic and smacked but little of the Almanach de Gotha. Some time later I heard of his having done something very mean and bad. Then I looked up his pedigree, and discovered that he was the son and grandson of men who had made the huge family fortune—thanks to which the title had been acquired—in the slave trade.

Moore is a most entertaining man, but he speaks without much reflection and readily sacrifices fact to epigram. To describe the Irish literary movement as so much sterilised bouillon is an instance in point. It is a clever saying, but it is not true. Of this I was able to convince myself before I left Dublin, where I made the acquaintance of a number of interesting personalities directly associated with that Irish literary movement which Moore derided. I was entertained at the house of Mr Oldham, the hon. secretary of the Contemporary Club, on the evening of its first meeting for the winter season. This takes place regularly every Saturday at Mr Oldham's very comfortable and spacious house in Leeson Street (not many doors removed from the house in which Speranza wrote her famous article " Jacta est Alea "). The proceedings of the club are based on the axiom of high thinking and plain . . . drinking. Nothing but tea is consumed by the members, though an exception used to be made in favour of the old Fenian editor, Mr O'Leary, who always had his thimbleful of whisky before he went home.

The evenings, and the nights too (for the club sometimes does not separate before two o'clock on the Sunday morning), are spent in discussion of some literary subject. The proceedings are most orderly. Each member is requested to address the Chair and he may not be interrupted until he has finished his say. There were a number of interesting people there on the night that I was the guest of the club, and I spent an entertaining and instructive evening. Mr Oldham makes an excellent leader of debate. He is profoundly learned in all questions of statistics and political economy, but he can speak too, and speak well, on other subjects. William Butler Yeats was there and I was pleased to make his acquaintance. I admired his striking figure and appearance. He has all the physical advantages which make for success and, as I wrote to him the other day, with such gifts, *quo non ascendas* ? He speaks wonderfully well. He has a winning voice devoid of affectation and he talks from an evident fund of thought and knowledge. For the rest, all the Irishmen I heard that night displayed the same facility of speech and power of language, facundity in one word, which I have so long admired in the Southern French. With this difference, however, the Irishman seems to speak about things on which he is perfectly informed. Your Gascon can and will speak for hours on a subject about which he knows naught.

I was struck in Mr Yeats' remarks with the intimate knowledge he possesses of America. He seemed to have something to say about every one of its principal cities and to have met most of its leading men and women. There is no doubt that if Mr Yeats cared to devote his energies and talents to his own advancement he might take a foremost place in the literary world of London, but he seems to have given himself up entirely to that Irish literary movement of which Moore spoke so disdainfully. His great interest is in the Irish theatre which he has started. Here the plays of modern Irish dramatists are performed. The patronage of the Dublin public is very poor, and after the first night or two of a new piece the house is practically empty. During my stay in Dublin the financial arrangements of the company were put on another basis. I think that it was turned into a limited liability company, which will relieve Yeats of a serious responsibility. At the same time his autocracy in the matter of selection of plays and general management, very fortunately, remains undisturbed.

On the same evening I had the pleasure of meeting his father, an Irish painter of great talent, who is one of the most courteous gentlemen I met with in Dublin —that city of good manners. The poet who writes under the initials " A. E.," and whose poems have lately been taken over by the publishing house of Macmillan, was another member present.

The dramatist Syng was there also, just back from the Blaskett Islands, some wild and rocky islets in the Atlantic, where, I understand, he lived in the hut of the king of these islands, and was entertained by this monarch, who is as proud of his descent and monarchy as any of the gentlemen whose names figure in the Almanach de Gotha, with patriarchal hospitality. Every morning the king himself brought him his matutinal noggin of Irish whisky to his bedside wherewith to break his fast, and the king's daughter, otherwise the princess royal, used to hold the basin in which he performed his ablutions and with her royal hands used to wipe him dry. I had not the opportunity of much conversation with this remarkable young man ; otherwise I should have liked to have asked him whether he found that living in such a place as the Blaskett Islands he was able to write good work. I myself have found that life in remote places, where one is deprived of all intellectual companionship, produces a fatal stagnation of the brain. One rapidly turns towards the state of a vegetable, or at best, a sea-anemone. However, very possibly the king and princess of the Blasketts are highly intellectual companions. The Gaels, no matter to what class of society they belong, always know something interesting and always have something to say, which is what cannot be said of the Anglo-Saxon.

I found O'Leary an entertaining old gentleman, with the most delightful manners, which contrasted very much with his wild appearance. He resembled somewhat a King Lear in his decadence, yet he carried himself with the dignity of a bishop. It was painful to hear him speak of his prison experiences, and I could not help wondering what political or other purpose could have been served by torturing this man. A great charm to me in the man's company proceeded from the utter want of resentment with which he spoke of the powers which broke his life and health and left him at an advanced age so poor a man. Really one does not find such gentlemen as in Dublin in any other city in England. He broke down and wept before the evening was out and I attributed that to his evident weak state of health. One does not serve years in an English convict prison without feeling the effects of the " system " on one's health in after years. I understood that the poor old gentleman's main anxiety in life was to know what sort of a funeral would be accorded to him by his fellow-townsmen. Would it be as big a funeral as the one given to So-and-So? The old gentleman was in very poor circumstances and sadly neglected. He was eking out his small means by selling occasional volumes from his rare library, which was heaped up ceiling high in the poor room which he occupied till the day of his death.

"A. E." did not speak a word during the whole evening, but a few days later I spent a very pleasant evening with him up in his house which is in a remote suburb of Dublin, and which adjoins the cottage where Maud Gonne lives when she comes to Ireland. "A. E.'s" studio is full of interesting pictures. He has the aspirations of a Corot and is an apt portrait painter besides. At his house I met Jack Yeats the painter, who had an exhibition of paintings at the Leinster Hall in Molesworth Street at that time.

A characteristic sketch by Jack Yeats is given as frontispiece to the little volume of poems, entitled "New Songs," which, edited by "A. E." as a "Lyric Selection made by A. E. from Poems by Padraic Colum, Eva Gore-Booth, Thomas Keohler, Alice Milligan, Susan Mitchell, Seumas O'Sullivan, George Roberts, and Ella Young," and published by O'Donoghue, the author of that excellent Life of Mangan which one can now obtain nowhere, was then in a third edition. It is called "The Plougher," and illustrates one of the most remarkable poems written by that remarkable young man, Padraic Colum. I cannot help saying how much I was struck with the power of this youth's verse. He has language; he has philosophy, he has colour and he has depth, and in the matter of technique we may salute him as a master. Unlike most young men his poems do not echo what he has read. Possibly he reminds one of Walt Whitman, but the probability is that he has arrived at the same plane of thought as the American sage by the same process. I did not have the advantage of meeting him while I was in Dublin. He was out of town, working at the revision of a play of which Yeats told me great things, and I can only judge of his mental composition from the few pieces of his work which I have had the privilege of reading. I think "The Plougher" very fine indeed. The thought embodied in the last two couplets is of the highest philosophy and is expressed in the highest of language. He has described a plougher at sunset, in the silence of the land :

"Slowly the darkness falls, the broken lands blend the savage,
The brute-tamer stands by the brutes, by a head's breadth only above them !
A head's breadth, ay, but therein is Hell's depth and the height up to Heaven,
And the thrones of the gods, and their halls and their chariots, purples and splendours."

Very high expectations were entertained in Ireland of the future work of Padraic Colum. He had a good chance to impose himself on the world. An American Mæcenas, one of those men for whom all young poets long, but who comes so rarely at the right time, as he did though to Coleridge and, in the person of Raisley Calvert, to Wordsworth, was making a suitable allowance to the young man, so that he might have a chance of working his best, untrammelled by the soul-destroying care or anxiety of poverty. This American was giving him £100 a year for three years. People in Ireland were saying that

Colum would make a splendid return for this investment. I wonder how he is progressing. I have heard of him no more.

Before I left Dublin I spent a very agreeable hour with Professor Dowden at his fine house outside the city. It was a rare treat. Dowden is a great admirer of Wordsworth, and was able to show me a collection of portraits of him, many of which were unfamiliar to me. We talked literature all the time, naturally, and one of the things that we discussed was, apropos of writers who spend hours over one phrase, whether hasty work can be good. I had been quoting the example of De Quincey, whose English prose has always seemed to me *facile princeps* for beauty and limpidity. Dowden said that it was a great mistake to think that the constant use of the whetstone was necessary to produce perfect prose ; that many of the finest things that had been written had been the result of a spurt of genius. I was thinking about Moore's remarks on Flaubert as the professor spoke. Dowden showed me some of De Quincey's manuscript, and would have shown me, only he could not lay hands upon them, some of the proofs bearing the master's corrections of "The Stagecoach," "The Vision of Sudden Death," which many think the most beautiful, as also the most gruesome, of his fantastic inventions.

I was sorry that Dowden could not find these proofs, for I wanted particularly to look at the author's writing. I hold that morbid visions of the kind described in "The Stagecoach" never are pure creations. I hold that they always reveal in the writer a morbid physical state. If I may use slang, I will say that they are the writings of a man who is in a “jag.” I don’t believe that a healthy man ever does write morbid or fantastic matter. I think that “The Stagecoach” was written by De Quincey after a particularly purple opium debauch, in that state of nervous reaction which makes men who have been drinking feel that the roof of the house is going to fall in and crush them. It is not in nature for a healthy man to have morbid imaginings. We know what price poor Poe and poorer Baudelaire paid so that we might be thrilled with their terrible phantasies. De Quincey’s writing on that proof might have shown the state he was in at that time, though, of course, between the actual writing of the essay and the correcting of the proof he may have had ample time to recover his equanimity and the steadiness of his hand.

CHAPTER VI

The Cost of a Duel—An unearned Notoriety—Coulson Kernahan warned—Robert Barr and Henry Harland as Seconds—Anonymity a Preventive—Preparing for an Encounter—A prudent Landlord—Dodging the Police—Alan Breck and the Chevalier Johnson—Paul de Kock as a Duellist—And as a Writer—D'Artagan *redivivus*—Swashbuckling on the Cheap—John Barlas, Poet—Carrier Pigeons and Marconigrams—John Davidson and the Goloshes of Fortune

It would indeed have been a pity if George Moore had been run through the body by Whistler, because George Moore is a very fine writer and one of the very few art critics in England who are worth listening to. However, had he been residing in Paris at the time when Whistler sent him his *cartel*, it is difficult to see how he could have avoided the encounter, public prejudice being what it is in Paris. I know very well that, if only for motives of economy, I should gladly have avoided "going out" more than once. I was never desirous of the reputation of fire-eater, which at one period of my career in Paris I "enjoyed."[1] A duel never costs you less than 300 francs, and if you have no friend who is a doctor and who will come out with you without a fee, so that you have to hire the attendance of a professional gentleman, you have two or three louis more to pay. A certain sum has to be spent in preliminaries, in cabs for your seconds to attend the meetings with the other man's representatives, in outlay at the *cafés* where these meetings and discussions take place. Then comes the hiring of the barouche or landau in which you proceed to the field of honour. If the duel is a pistol duel you have to hire your weapons from Gastine Renette, who charges anything up to four pounds for the loan of the same. At one time, by the way, the combatant had reason to rejoice in taking his pistols at this famous shooting gallery. He often may have owed his life to that. The man at Gastine Renette's always used to ask when duelling pistols were wanted: "Is it for a really serious duel?" The seconds would, of course, say "Yes," and then the attendant before handing them the case containing the shooters used to do something to them which rendered it absolutely impossible for a man taking any kind of aim to hit what he was firing at.

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[1] I use the word "enjoyed" here in the same way as in Yorkshire they say "I enjoy very bad health." It is an instance of the *lucus a non lucendo* idiom.

If swords are being used, the weapons have to be bought, though that is of course cheaper than hiring pistols. On the way out there are always small expenses. Often light refreshment, frequently repeated, has to be offered to the seconds and the doctor, and if the coachman who is driving the party is to be expected to look solemn and impressed, instead of wreathing his face with sarcastic and derisive smiles, he has to be kept well primed with his favourite *consommation*. After the duel is over it is the rule to invite one's seconds and the doctor to a lunch at a first-class restaurant in town, and of course, if one has been reconciled with one's adversary, one may want to invite him also, together with his party. Twelve pounds, therefore, is quite a low estimate for the cost of "going out" in Paris, and it is fortunate that this is so, otherwise one would hear of many more of these *opera-bouffe* encounters being forced upon peaceable persons like myself.

Being a resident in Paris, and associating by profession and inclination with every kind of French society, from the *faubourg* down to . . . well, the *faubourg* again, it was impossible for me to have the reputation of a man who does not fight, and whenever I was challenged I accepted the *cartel* with resignation, if not with enthusiasm. On only one occasion was I the challenging party. Under the circumstances it was rather hard to learn that I passed in London for a swashbucklering bully.

Coulson Kernahan told me that the first time he saw me was at one of those literary At Homes which used to be given at *The Idler* office, and that I was pointed out to him as a "very dangerous man." "Beware," said his informant, "how you give offence to that man. He will call you out and run you through the body as soon as look at you." Kernahan said that he had no intention whatever of offending me, and that he would certainly arrange matters so as not to give me any opportunity of running him through the body. In this way are reputations made or unmade. I had done no more than conform myself to the rule that in Rome one should do as the Romans do, and in my own land was pilloried for my pains. And this was specially hard because I had always been careful that nothing should appear in any papers concerning any of the *affaires d'honneur* which were forced upon me. I used to tell my seconds to make this stipulation a *sine quâ non*. But having asked Robert Barr, at that time editor of *The Idler*, and again Henry Harland, to act as my seconds in the serious affair alluded to above, in which I was forced to challenge a man, these gentlemen, when they returned to London, naturally talked about it, and so my swashbucklering reputation was made. Barr seemed to be highly amused by the bored and casual way in which I spoke to him of the business and made up rather a good tale about it all.

Harland, on the other hand, worked the thing up into a short story for *The Idler*, but somewhat perfidiously made me, under a transparent transposition of names, figure as an odious aggressor and bully, my adversary receiving all the sympathy of the reader. The story ended on a pathetic note. I was supposed to have killed my adversary, and Harland, who was the young man's second, and who tells the story in the first person, exclaims, "And I, I have to go and break the news to his mother." All of which I thought rather Carthaginian.

Harland was a fidgety, nervous man with a great deal of literary talent, but with a weakness for posturing which used rather to irritate people who were thrown into contact with him. He could not sit down in a drawing-room like an ordinary mortal, but used to spring upon the chair and descend with his legs crossed beneath him, Turkish fashion, in which uncomfortable position he would sit until he took his leave. He started in life as a writer of sensational stuff which sold very well, but the contact of certain very clever people in London turned him into another equally profitable field. Towards the end of his life he was making a good income from his books—from two thousand to three thousand a year—but the vein was a very shallow one and would soon have been exhausted.

Publicity being the soul of the modern French duel, it is, I think, a pity that the Parisian newspapers—

from a spirit of confraternity—so readily insert the reports of these encounters, as well as the letters exchanged between principals and seconds, the *procès-verbaux* and so forth. If the usual tariff for *reclame* advertisements at so much a line were applied to these announcements, one would hear much less about the warlike ardours of young people who are thirsting for notoriety.

In this respect the French newspaper, *Le Journal du Caire*, published in Egypt, sets a good example. It inserts no duelling matter otherwise than as a paid advertisement, and heads any such communications, *Insertions Payées*. I ought to have asked Monsieur Thoméguex, the famous duellist, whom I met on the *Heliopolis* going out to Alexandria, what he thought of this innovation. I do not think that he would have approved of it, for Monsieur Thoméguex, who is a very able writer on colonial matters, is a fighter who does not disdain publicity, and only the other day I noticed a report of a duel in which he wounded a Monsieur Meyer, at which a cinematograph operator was present taking films of the encounter. Thoméguex, by the way, is in his person a speaking argument in favour of the practice of fencing. Although a stout, almost bulky, man he is the incarnation of grace and activity. And his fencing keeps him in good health and spirits, so that among the many bright and charming Frenchmen on board the *Heliopolis*, on her maiden voyage, none was more popular than he. I remember that the ladies in the drawing-room after dinner were always much diverted by the Parisianism of his anecdotes. He related one which illustrates the ease with which divorces are procured in France when both parties are willing. A friend of his, he said, was married to a very beautiful and elegant young woman, who, as was natural with such physical attractions, was a woman of very expensive tastes. "My poor friend loved her very much," he said, "but he was quite unable to give her many of the things which she needed, so he agreed to allow her to divorce him. This she did and married a very rich man. My friend and she continued on excellent terms of *camaraderie*, and the woman used to visit her ex-husband and tell him how unhappy she was with her new spouse. Finally she divorced the rich husband." Thoméguex did not add whether she married the old one a second time, but one hopes that this may be the ending of his story as he used to say that the poor husband loved the woman very, very much, because she was very beautiful and "such a dear."

When circumstances forced me to provoke my man I was very much in earnest, and thought that, as a duel had been forced upon me, it should at least be a serious one. Therefore, I was most anxious not to fight it with pistols. This pistol is described as the coward's weapon, and very rarely indeed does the formula of the concluding *procès-verbal* vary from the stereotyped: "Two shots were exchanged without result." But at that time my fencing had grown very rusty, so whilst preliminaries were being discussed I went to a fencing school to be coached. The master—the place was somewhere in the Rue de Rennes—had the reputation of being able to teach a man in two lessons how not to get killed in a sword duel. I was not anxious to get killed and so gladly availed myself of his instructions. These mainly consisted in showing one how to hold one's point always towards one's adversary with extended arm. When a man so holds his weapon it is, it appears, impossible for the other man to wound him. At the same time it was said to be advisable to develop great suppleness of leg and ankle, so as to be able to leap back, still holding one's point extended, in the event of the other man rushing forward with such impetuosity as possibly to break down one's guard. It was further explained to me, that if whilst leaping back I could also dig forward with my sword most satisfactory results might be hoped for (for me, *not* for the other man).

The preliminaries dragged very much (as the other man was difficult to find at home, and indeed was supposed to flee precipitately into a wardrobe whenever my seconds called at his house), so that I had plenty of time to reacquire the rudiments of rapier play. In the end, however, the duel had after all to be fought with pistols. My adversary declared that he knew nothing about fencing and was not prepared to make a fool of himself on the field of honour. It was very hard on me, who had taken so much pains on his behalf, that I could leap backwards with surprising agility while digging my point forward with, as the *maître d'armes* assured me, a certainty of most effective results.

The man had technically the right of choice of weapons and he chose pistols. My seconds then obliged me to pass the evening before the duel at a shooting gallery, where I spent a couple of louis in firing duelling pistols at a man's figure. I remember that the person in attendance in the gallery was somewhat intoxicated. He was much interested in the purpose of my visit and expressed the greatest sympathy. He kept up a running comment on my firing.

When I hit the figure in the face he cried out: "Ah, the pig! That has broken his pipe." When I hit the man in the chest he opined that that would deprive the "blackguard" of his taste for bread, and when my bullet hit the figure in the stomach he gleefully expressed the opinion that it would spoil the "old cow's" breakfast for her. It was gruesome enough, seeing that I was exercising in view of a real encounter, and I remember—a curious psychological fact—that I resented his coarse abuse of my adversary, as figured by the dummy. It seemed to me an offence against the courtesy and dignity that should preside at an encounter on the field of honour, and I frequently requested him to moderate his expressions. But he was vinously enthusiastic in my cause and thought to show his partisanship by exulting in the fictive injuries which I was inflicting on the other man.

I am heartily glad to say that his farewell predictions that I should "teach him how to live" (by killing him) were not realised. I do not think that I should ever have forgiven myself if I had taken the man's life, or even if I had seriously injured him. We fired two shots at each other. Just as I had discharged my pistol for the second time I saw "the other man" give a jump, and the horrid expectation came that he would topple over. Fortunately, however, nothing had happened. My bullet had just grazed his right ear. It was a runaway knock by Death, and I hope that the lesson served him, because his conduct towards me had been very bad indeed. I have often shuddered to think what would have been the result if the muzzle of my pistol had been held a fraction of an inch more to the left. A difference of nothing more than the width of a ruled line would, at the distance of twenty paces, have brought my bullet crashing into his temple.

Our original intention had been to fight this duel in the Hermitage at Villebon, which was in those days a favourite rendezvous for duellists, but on arriving at that forest hostelry, and explaining our purpose, the landlord declared that he allowed no more pistol duels to be fought on his premises. The gentlemen, he declared, fired wildly. He had some glass-houses on either side of the garden and he did not care to have his glass smashed. Also on one occasion an old pony, grazing in a field somewhere to the right, had been badly hurt: another bullet had killed a favourite cat. We were welcome to use his garden for sword-play, but if we were decided upon a pistol duel he must really ask us to go elsewhere.

It was not at all an easy matter to find a pitch for the encounter. The *gendarmerie* at Sèvres had, it appeared, received instructions to stop any duelling in the Meudon woods—possibly because of the inconvenience and danger to the public by the wild firing to which the landlord of the Hermitage had objected—and a sharp lookout was being kept for duelling parties. A premium had been offered to various small boys for information as to the arrival on the Sèvres *gendarmerie* territory of "a double set of four serious-looking gentlemen in black frock-coats driving in landaus, with one gentleman in each set with his *gueule de travers* (his mug awry)." No sooner had our little procession emerged from the inhospitable Hermitage than some boys who had been loitering outside set off running at great speed, and not long afterwards we saw in the distance two mounted gendarmes approaching. We had to drive about for more than two hours before we outdistanced the representatives of law and order, and I fancy that all the four gentlemen in each set had their *gueules de travers* by the time we were able to get to business.

The fact that my adversary's ear had been grazed by my bullet got abroad, and the following day, much to my annoyance, there appeared a report that I had shot my man's ear off. This was, of course, cabled to London, and one of the papers there gravely opined that I owed an apology, as an Englishman, to the British nation, for taking part in so degrading an encounter. Another editor saw the chance of good copy in my experience and that evening I received a telegram asking me to contribute an article on my duel. I stipulated for anonymity, so my article was published as by "An English Fire-Eater," an appellation which I had certainly not deserved.

In this way, I suppose, I acquired the reputation which led to the warning which was given to Coulson Kernahan, and I quite agree that a man with an aptitude for digging his point viciously forward while himself leaping backwards with agility out of danger is not the most agreeable person one can fall in with.

Which reminds me of Alan Stuart Breck in Stevenson's "Kidnapped." Here was a fire-eater with a vengeance. I remember how I used to admire the author of this creation. However, not very long ago, I discovered that Alan Breck was not a production of Stevenson's at all. He was a historical character, and his real name was the Chevalier Johnson, Jacobite, of whose adventures, including a flight through the heather, a full record exists. Stevenson seems to have taxed his imagination little, if at all, in writing "Kidnapped." The material for it was all at hand in the record to which I refer. Even that pretty passage where a girl is so touched by the danger and misery of the fugitives that she herself rows the Jacobites over the firth into safety is taken from the history in question.

Stevenson seems to have had a great talent for adapting and appropriating the writings and ideas of others. I find much that is in "Treasure Island" in various histories of the buccaneers. He took the striking names of some of his pirates from real characters, Pugh, Israel Hands and others. An instance of clever adaptation is the passage where the maroon, Benjamin Gunn, tells the cabin-boy that his career of evil all began with gambling on "the blessed gravestones." On reading this, a vivid picture presents itself to one's mind's eye, but it is not a picture of Stevenson's creation. We have all seen the engraving by Hogarth of the idle apprentice lying outside the church playing pitch and toss on a gravestone, while the beadle approaches with uplifted stick. I suppose authors have as much right to use other men's pictures as have stage managers, who bring a curtain down on a scene which reproduces some famous historical tableau. But it lessens one's admiration for the creative genius of an author to find him producing effects with the work of other men.

Apropos of authors I have more than once hoped, when being forced to go out on the "field of honour," that my adversary might imitate the man with whom Paul de Kock fought his one and only duel. This was a person who had spoken very rudely about the author of "Mon ami Raymond" in a drawing-room in which Paul de Kock happened to be present. A challenge followed and a pistol duel was decided upon. The parties met out in the Bois de Boulogne, and whilst the seconds were arranging preliminaries, Paul de Kock's man edged away out of sight behind some trees. A minute or two later he was seen running with unparalleled velocity in the direction of Paris. One of his seconds, who had turned green while the pistols were being loaded, cried out that his friend must have lost something and that it was his duty to run after him and help him to find it. So he too set off at top-speed. The other second hesitated a moment and then, without making any remark, turned and ran too. It was afterwards ascertained that the principal did not stop running until he had reached the Porte Maillot and had taken refuge in a cab, to the driver of which he gave orders to lash his horse into a gallop. Paul de Kock and his seconds waited for half-an-hour, and then the combat ceased—in the famous words of a French dramatic author—for want of combatants.

An account of this appears in "Paul de Kock's Memoirs," a book which I can recommend to anyone who wants to read a vivid and interesting account of life in Paris during the first fifty or sixty years of the last century. Paul de Kock was the son of the de Kock, a rich Dutch banker, who was guillotined under the Terror. Fouquier-Tinville wanted to arrest his mother also, and had indeed come for that purpose to the villa in which the poor woman was living at Passy. But while he was interrogating her, little Paul, who was in his mother's arms, caught hold of the scoundrel's finger and "rostled" with it. For once in his life Fouquier-Tinville's tiger heart was touched. He decided that it would be too cruel to separate the woman from her child and agreed to leave her at liberty until little Paul was weaned. Thermidor intervened and Fouquier-Tinville's sanguinary activities received a final check under the knife of the guillotine.

Paul de Kock relates his first experiences of authorship and gives most interesting pictures of the Bohemia of Paris during the last century. He quotes with great pride a very flattering letter he received from Bulwer Lytton, and relates that Monsieur de Chateaubriand considered his novel "Mon Ami Raymond" the most interesting work of fiction he had ever read. But what he was proudest of is that the Pope's favourite reading were the books of Paolo di Kocko, of which a complete set was kept in his Holiness's dressing-room.

Paul de Kock detested smoking and had a horror of travelling. He relates that he only once went on a journey and that was when he drove down to Rosny to see the château of the Duchesse de Berry, a distance of about forty miles. He was very fond of cats, and declared that a cat is a much better companion than a dog. When I first came to Paris, Paul de Kock was looked upon as a pornographic writer. To-day his works have quite lived down that evil reputation. He is one of the most popular authors, and many cheap editions of his amusing books have been and are being issued. I know few books which are easier or pleasanter to read. They are full of humour, of pleasant satire, and as pictures of Parisian *bourgeois* life during the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century they have never been equalled. Poor Paul de Kock's great grievance was that he never received the red ribbon of the Legion of Honour. That was because his writings were supposed not to be quite moral. How things have changed since then! Men who have first made a reputation by writing a filthy book reach the highest honours in the Paris of to-day and the Legion of Honour counts many men by the side of whose works Paul de Kock's writings have the insipidity of Maria Edgeworth.

I am not quite sure which is the more unworthy, to run away from one's adversary on the field of honour, as Paul de Kock's traducer did, or to win for oneself an easy reputation as a man of courage by boasting of encounters which never took place. Some years ago Paris was full of the heroic deeds of a man who was that morning christened by all the papers "D'Artagnan *redivivus*." It was reported that on the previous afternoon, having fought a duel in the Bois de Boulogne, where he had run his man through, he had next accepted challenges then and there from his adversary's two seconds, defeated each of these in turn and finished up by spitting a fourth man, whose remarks had failed to please him. This Cyrano *avant la lettre* was a well-known man, a frequenter of the fencing saloons, and people had always ranked him as a good swordsman. But four duels one after the other, and complete victory in each! Paris made a hero of him. His portrait was published in all the morning papers with long eulogistic articles. He was described as the typical Frenchman; references were made to the *furia francese* and the old chivalrous spirit which still inspires Gaul. Alas! that same evening, we learned that another canard had flown through the city. We had all been duped. There never had been any duel the day before. Not one of the four encounters had existed otherwise than in the diseased imagination of the swordsman, whom approaching madness had transformed into a swashbuckler. The poor fellow was suffering from an attack of megalomania, which is invariably the forerunner of general paralysis. By the irony of Nature the man whom she intends to degrade into something much lower than the lowest of animals imagines himself the most powerful, the most gifted, the wealthiest of men. Paris was sorry to have to admit that this particular Frenchman had not shown the chivalry and skill which had been attributed to him, but the papers declared that there were plenty of men walking about the boulevards who would be fully prepared to fight four men one after the other without turning a hair, "the race of d'Artagnans being by no means extinct in France."

I should not be inclined to rank amongst the modern d'Artagnans the English journalist who once challenged my poor friend John Barlas (Evelyn Douglas), the Scotch poet, to a duel. I had taken this man to call on the poet, who was living, during a brief visit to Paris with his wife and son, in a miserable garret in the Rue Victor Massé, just opposite the Chat Noir. The two men got to talking on socialism. Barlas was an ardent socialist, and ranked it as a great achievement in his life that during the riots in Trafalgar Square, Heaven knows how many years ago, he had been struck down by a policeman's bludgeon, falling at the "very feet of one of the daughters of Karl Marx." The journalist was cynical and superior in his manner, and apparently irritated Barlas, whose mind was not well balanced, into fury. I suddenly saw him leap upon the man, belabour him soundly and fling him out of his garret. I told the journalist that Barlas was hardly to be held responsible, but he saw there a chance for a cheap and good advertisement, and sent the poet his seconds. I am sorry to say that that distinguished writer Monsieur Maurice Leudet, of *Le Figaro*, was one of them. Barlas met them in the Café Durand. Then he rose up and, addressing the fashionable crowd of diners there, announced that he had been challenged to a duel, that he was without friends in Paris, and that he hoped that two of the men present would render a gentleman the service of assisting him in a matter of honour. Alas! the days of chivalry are over. People stared and laughed, and poor Barlas flung out of the place, crying out that chivalry was no more to be found on earth.

The journalist was delighted at the issue events had taken. He had secured his advertisement without having to incur any risk, and immediately requested his seconds to carry round to the papers a full account of how John Barlas had refused a challenge. I was present at the time, and I declared that it would be no kind of conduct to do so, that Barlas knew nothing about duelling, was a stranger in Paris, and that it was certainly unfair to his name and family to besmirch him under such circumstances. I added that I should go straightway to the papers, explain the matter to the editors and beg of their gentlemanly instinct not to publish any such *procès-verbal.* And I did go to the *Figaro*, where I was received by Monsieur Calmette, who very kindly kept the thing out of his paper. I am sorry to say that some account did appear in some of the other newspapers.

Poor Barlas! I had made his acquaintance at Oxford. He was at the same college, where he had already earned a reputation as a writer of beautiful verse. There are many of us who still hope that some day his talents may be recognised. He published some years ago, under the pseudonym of Evelyn Douglas, several volumes of verse. These, however, were, for the most part, printed by small local printers, were not reviewed or pushed in any way, and attracted little or no attention except amongst his friends. I understood a year or two ago that a selection from these various volumes was in preparation and I hoped that people were at last to have a chance of repairing the gross injustice which was done to him in the utter disregard of his genius. But alas! it is to be feared that the poor fellow will never know if the day of atonement does dawn for him, for for a long time past his fine brain has been obscured. Poverty and suffering, and too great sympathy for the myriad woes of this world, threw over his brilliant intellect and for years he has been confined in a Scotch asylum. I do not even know if he be still alive, for my inquiries have failed to elicit any information.

Here, by the way, is one of his sonnets. It will be recognised, in spite of one or two little technical blemishes, as the work of a true poet:

"Loosed from strange hands into the wild, wet night
Straight to his home the carrier-dove returns:
The faithful love that in his bosom burns
Is as a lamp to guide his lonely flight:
He lingers not, where sheltering boughs invite,
Nor backward from the gathering tempest turns
Till far off in the distance he discerns
At the known casement the familiar light.

How many miles hath my poor spirit flown
This night to thee through wind and storm and rain
Bearing thee word of many mystic things,
Till thou on thy soft pillow making moan,
Didst hear it pecking at thy lattice pane
And took'st it in, a dove with draggled wings."

I remember poor Barlas reading me this sonnet in his rooms on the first quadrangle of New College. Like all his love verses, it was addressed to the beautiful girl, a grand-niece of Lord Nelson's, who afterwards, under very romantic circumstances, and while he was still an Oxford undergraduate, became his wife. Barlas was the direct descendant of that Kate Douglas who, using her arm to bar the door while her lord the king was escaping, won for herself and her line the noble name of Bar-Lass.

The above sonnet was republished some time ago in a magazine article dealing with the poet and his works, with this editorial comment: "One may suspect that the poet's ornithology was at fault in making the carrier-pigeon fly in the night-time." Is this correct? I remember that two days after we left Le Havre de Grace for New York on the *Champagne*, when I was doing my pauper emigrant work (that was before the days of wireless telegraphy), a covey of carrier-pigeons was released to carry news of us back to France, and as it was late in the afternoon when this took place I fancy that unless those pigeons could, like the sea-gulls, cradle themselves on the bosom of the deep, they would have to travel by night.

Apropos of "homers," a remark made to me once by a Northamptonshire squire always makes me laugh. I daresay the thing is a "chestnut," but it is certainly funny. He told me that a friend of his had been trying to cross pigeons with parrots, and when I asked him why, he said: "So that the cross-breeds can ask their way in a fog."

I do not know what sort of messages were despatched that afternoon by the pigeons. I hope that they were more interesting than the first Marconigram that it was ever my privilege to read. This was shown me in the "Five o'Clock Club" in the Savoy Hotel by my old friend Marcus Mayer, the *impresario*, and was one of the very first private wireless cables that was ever received in London from mid-Atlantic. It ran: "Get me double-bedded room —— Hotel and two stalls for Merry Widow, Saturday night. Mrs J. is not to know I am in Europe. J."

The Marconi system of telegraphy is, of course, very wonderful, but when is any great saying, truth or axiom going to be wafted from the clouds to an anxious humanity panting for truth, from some mid-ocean sage, which shall make one recognise the inestimable benefit which was conferred upon us by an invention which enabled us so many days, so many hours, so many minutes earlier than would have been possible by ordinary transmission to hear the new gospel, the new philosophy, the new discovery, the new truth. When I was travelling to Alexandria on the Egyptian Mail Steamship Company's magnificent liner, the *Heliopolis*, we had a Marconigraph apparatus on board and every morning there was served with our breakfast a printed sheet giving us a reprint of the messages which had been sent through the air to our ship. I used to scan those lines very eagerly. Here were wonderful things made new, but alas! there was nothing for the surprise of the sky children. One morning one would learn that "the Skupstchina was to assemble in a fortnight," the next that "Monsieur Fallières had gone to Rambouillet for a little shooting." And so on. Human ingenuity strides along. Humanity wallows. We invent wonderful things to serve no purpose at all, except, perhaps, further to convince us of our impotence, helplessness and limitations.

As I remarked the other day, while crossing from New York on the *Kaiserin Auguste-Victoria*, to my friend Dr Arnold Berliner, of Berlin :

> "Gegen die Dummheit kaempft der *Marconi* vergebens."

This paraphrases the famous German line :

> "The gods fight in vain against stupidity."

Marconi cannot supply us with ideas, though he has furnished a new and wonderful means of transmitting them.

As we sailed along the Cornish coast on that lovely spring evening, watching the sun setting behind Land's End, and in due course came opposite Penzance, I talked with Dr Berliner about poor John Davidson the poet, whose last home it was. Berliner had never heard of him. "But," he added, "it was only last year that I began to read Keats, and Shelley is still a closed book to me." I think that the very first time when Davidson came to call on me in London, he was wearing a pair of goloshes, and I remember saying to him that I hoped they were the Goloshes of Fortune. He had just stepped out on his way as a man of letters. I hoped that the Goloshes of Fortune might lead him to prosperity. Whither indeed they have led the poor man, there can be little doubt. I often have thought of Davidson's goloshes since I heard of the catastrophe of his end. Here was a man taking special precautions to keep well and be comfortable. Twenty years later the same man was to destroy his life under circumstances of great cruelty towards himself. We poor human things, with our puny efforts to protect and cherish ourselves, what sport does not destiny make of our weak defences! I once saw in the Morgue the body of a man who hanged himself that day in the Bois de Boulogne. He had plugs of fresh white cotton-wool in his ears, so that it showed that just before he went out on his fatal errand he was very solicitous about the health of that body which he was so very soon ruthlessly and fatally to spoil.

Davidson had only been in London a very short time when I first met him. He was married and had children, and was rather proud of the fact that he was living in the " very smallest house in town." Prudent, self-controlled, frugal and hard-working, with talents in counterpoise to his indisputable genius, he started on the literary career as well equipped as any man one has heard of. And it was all to end where it has ended.

There were other poets who used to come to my rooms in Charles Street, Grosvenor Square, and it is a disquieting fact, for me, that of those the three most brilliant and gifted have come to perdition in its cruellest form. Wilde was one, John Barlas was another. . . . What does destiny reserve for the fourth? Perhaps, however, as I really never had any claim to the title of poet, and as at any rate it is many years since I strung two rhymes together, I may escape.

It is circumstance of human interest that Davidson used to comment on the eccentricities of Barlas' conduct, and declare his conviction that his brother Scotsman would never make any way in life. He based this conviction on the conformation of Barlas' skull. " He has no back to his head—it goes down to his neck in a straight line," is what he once wrote me. Davidson himself had a well-shaped head, and yet which of the two, Barlas or he, has had the less fortunate end ?

I think that Davidson at any rate got a good deal of enjoyment out of life. I remember him as a very jovial fellow at those Charles Street gatherings. His face flushed red with talk and merriment, and in his excitement his wig used to push up over his forehead. His bright eyes sparkled and his whole body seemed alive with good fellowship and enjoyment. The mill-wheels of London ground much of his early *joie de vivre* out of him, but on the rare occasions when I did meet him in later years I found him genial and optimistic as ever. I remember one very pleasant afternoon we spent together in the Grosvenor Club, where, after luncheon, we adjourned to the library and rummaged amongst the books. We found an old record there of the Tower of London, with a long list of prisoners who had languished in its dungeons, and we commented on some of the names, speculating as to whether certain names do portend certain destinies. And we agreed that a certain " John Syndercombe " was indisputably foredoomed to Tower Hill. We did not conclude that " John Davidson " was as surely predestined to Penzance Pit.

His career is the best argument against the pursuit of literature as a profession, though it should dissuade no one against attempting to write successful copy. When I first heard of Davidson's death, I was dining in the most luxurious hotel in New York with an American author, who produces the best " sellers " in the U.S.A. There were some millionaires at the table next to ours, and I am sure that their dinner was not a bit more Lucullian than the one my host had set before me, and that his wife was fully as elegantly attired, if not as lavishly begemmed, as the very rich tradeswoman who was our neighbour. During dinner my friend was speaking of his dissatisfaction with the work he was doing, and described his longing to be engaged in the production of books which should rank as literature. And I had the song and sorrow of John Davidson in my mind at the time. So I said nothing, because there was nothing to say.

CHAPTER VII

Journalism and Literature—Richard Whiteing and John Davidson —Self-Advertisement, how considered in France—Commercialism in Literature—Keats' Letters as "Goods"—Barbey d'Aurevilly—Eccentricities unremunerative—Ernest Lajeunesse and his Work—Working in *Cafés*—Mr Crawford, Eugène Sue, Timothy Trimm—The Café Napolitain—Catulle Mendés as a "Ghost"—George Courteline as a Bureaucrat—Jean Moréas, Zola's, Méndés' and Verlaine's Opinions on him—The *Café* Habit—The Old Man in the Rue Vicq d'Azir—Henner on Wine Drinking—Mr Loubet's Bottle of Beaune—Messrs Stevenson and Osbourne's Bottle of Roussillon—John Keats' Bottle of Claret—"The Wrecker" and the Quartier—Henner and Bismarck on Beer—Beer Drinking in France—A Parisian Beer King—A Note on Chartreuse

If it had not been for an absurd prejudice against being ranked as a journalist, which made him despise and avoid the notoriety which he might have gained by the very excellent journalistic work he did for the newspapers and magazines, Davidson could have made himself popular enough to enable his publishers to make good sales of his less marketable literary wares—the poems, dialogues, dramatic sketches and novels. But he shared with many other English men of letters a very foolish contempt for journalism, as a profession below the dignity of the true man of letters. Of course it is nothing of the kind; of course some of the best literary work which is done in England is first, or exclusively, published in the periodicals. For years, for instance, Richard Whiteing, who is a finished master of letters and deserves to rank as quite one of our foremost British novelists, contributed daily to *The Daily News*, in the form of leading articles, essays on current topics which were literature of a very high order. It is true that Andrew Lang got most of the credit due to Richard Whiteing, but that was the result of the unfair system of anonymity which then obtained in the London press, nor did it diminish the benefit which Whiteing derived from the daily exercise of his pen in a high form of literary art.

Whiteing was proud of being a journalist, as I often heard him declare in his rooms in the Rue de Rivoli, when he lived in Paris. But then he had lived many years in France, and in France no snobbish distinctions are drawn between men who write for the newspapers and those who write for the publishers. Every great French writer, novelist, dramatist, poet, began as a contributor to the press ; many never abandoned these relations, even after great success. Davidson had the silly English prejudice against journalism as a profession, and so carefully veiled his connection with the papers that the big public never pierced through his anonymity. He wished to be known as a poet alone, on the strength and by reason of his published poems, and so it was that his name was familiar only to very few. If he had boldly signed his very clever newspaper and review articles, he could have won what passes nowadays as fame, with the emoluments that result from such notoriety. And his poetry and other work of the kind, which an American editor would classify as "soul-throb," the literary matter of which he was proud, would have sold all the better because of this notoriety.

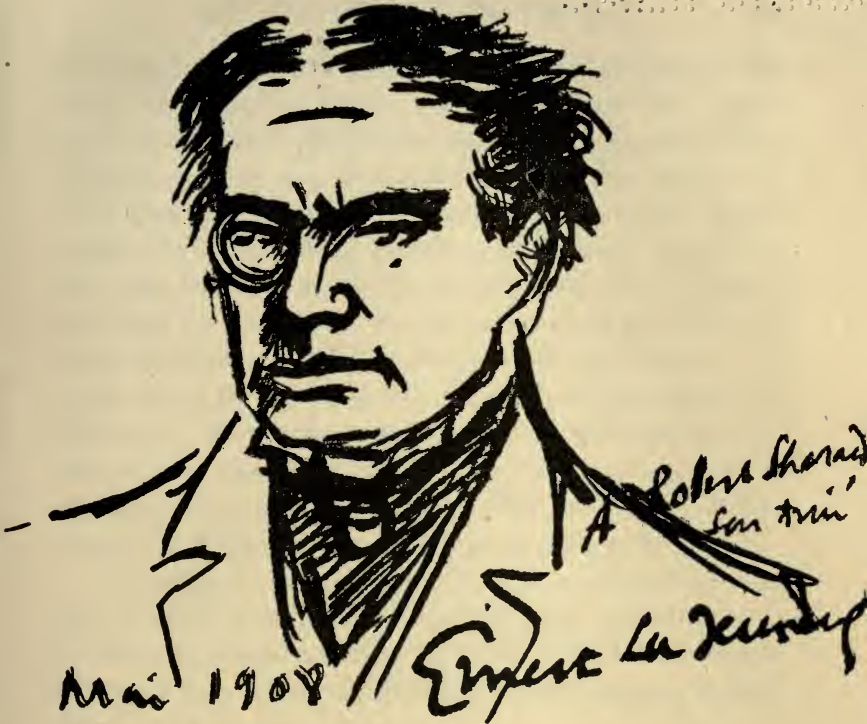
In Anglo-Saxon countries—though in these alone—notoriety inspires the reading-public with confidence. Literary success in these countries must be pursued in exactly the same way and by the same methods as any other business "proposition." I could name one very popular author who never fails, when any new work of his is due to appear, to start an advertising campaign, which has all to be carefully thought out and discussed, and the superlative cleverness of which is that he obtains a stupendous publicity of direct cash value without disbursing a farthing. In France or Germany such a proceeding would excite suspicion in the minds of the readers. The author would rank as a *farceur* or as a *fumiste,* and people would not be very inclined to read his work. Here and in America we are so essentially commercial that we can be drummed into admiring as a writer the man who persistently pushes himself and his wares. We are inclined to think that a writer who shows commercial aptitude is likely to practise the commercial axiom of giving us value for our money, to be inspired by the hope of earning some share of public patronage by supplying a good article at a reasonable price.

There seems no reason why literary men should not cast aside any lingering reticence or shame and come forward as tradesmen pure and simple. Nobody would consider this *infra dig* on their part, because the British public refuses to admit that a literary man as such is entitled to any dignity, and nothing that he might do to advance his interests would therefore appear derogatory. One cannot derogate from no position at all, which is the *locus* assigned to writers in this country.

I would like to see authors and publishers treating books exactly like any other kind of merchandise. I once saw an invoice sent to a friend of mine in which he was debited for so much "To Goods." I asked him what the goods were and he told me he had been buying some autographs, including letters from John Keats. That is the proper spirit in England and the proper expression. Keats' letters, goods. And why not? Let all authors look on their productions as goods and give up the *pose*—and it is nothing but a *pose*—of despising the commercial side of their trade.

I remember once arranging some advertisements for a lady friend of mine who had published a novel and who wanted it announced in an effective manner. I accordingly drew up six advertisements addressed to different classes of the community inviting them on various grounds to purchase and read the new work. In the phraseology of the advertising agent I made the "copy" as "pulling" as possible in all the series, but by far the most effective piece was the advertisement in which I invited "Business Men" to buy the book, on the grounds that the authoress had made it her principle, in writing it, to see that any purchaser "got full value for money." Such an advertisement in France would have covered both publisher and authoress with ridicule and would have disposed the public against the book. In England it was so effective that the special papers which deal with advertising commented eulogistically on the novelty and effectiveness of the advertisements, complimented the publisher on his originality, and referred complacently, as proof of the value of "pulling copy," to the big sales to which the book attained.

I cannot call to mind in France a single writer of prominence who has been able to put himself into commercial success by self-advertisement, by eccentricities of costume, scandal, or any of the other means which succeed so well here or in America.



A Robert Sherard son ami
Ernest La Jeunesse
Mai 1908

La Jeunesse (Ernest-Léon) né à Paris le mardi 23 Juin 1874, à 1h après midi. Etudes à Nancy. Oeuvres: La Prière d'Anatole France, (1895), les Nuits, les Ennuis et les Moeurs de nos plus notoires contemporains (1896), l'Imitation de Notre Maître Napoléon (1897), l'Holocauste (1898) l'Inimitable (1899), Demi-Volupté (1900), Sérénissime (1900) Cinq ans chez les Sauvages (1901) Le Boulevard (1906) Le Forçat honoraire (1907) Les Ruines, drame en 4 actes, La Dynastie, drame en 4 actes.
L'Epée au fourreau, roman, La Vérité sur Salomé, Rocaroc, homme d'Etat, préfaces, collaboration au Journal depuis 1896, Figaro, Gil Blas, Revue Blanche Phalange etc, etc.

ERNEST LA JEUNESSE.

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People there regard such writers with suspicion, and leave their books alone. Barbey d'Aurevilly might have had a good public and might have made money enough to live on in comfort. But the author of "Ce Qui Ne Meurt Pas" chose to walk about Montmartre in a ridiculous costume and cloak, ranked in the mind of the public in consequence as a *fumiste*, and had to confess as the outcome of it all that not more than thirty people used to read his books. "I write for a public of thirty people, not including my *concierge*," he once remarked to me with bitterness. The result was that he lived in great poverty in a small room in Montmartre and that but for the kindness of Paul Bourget he would have died in hospital.

In England, eccentricity—which is almost always *pose*—helps an author and is a paying "proposition." In France, where as often as not it is a manifestation of one of the curious characteristics of genius, it damns him.

One of the young writers in France of to-day, a man whom I admire immensely and rank as a literary genius, is Ernest Lajeunesse, to whose splendid work I called attention in my "Twenty Years in Paris." I have always held that the reason why he has not been financially successful in any degree proportionate to his great merits is because of his personal eccentricities. In France the literary man who goes in for eccentricity does not rank as *serieux*, and the French public, which *au fond* is essentially commercial, fights shy of him for the very reason which in England attracts the reader. Ernest Lajeunesse, who is an artist to his finger-tips, has tastes in the matter of dress and personal adornment which are unusual. He is very fond of all kinds of barbaric jewellery, and covers his fingers with weird rings. I suppose the French reader considers that a man who spends so much time in the bric-à-brac shops hunting up old jewels cannot give full value for money in his literary work. Anyhow, there is no boom in Ernest Lajeunesse, which in such a country as France, where literary genius ranks so high, is an extraordinary phenomenon.

I do not think I am exaggerating in saying that Lajeunesse is quite the best stylist living in France at the present day. And the cruel thing about the public indifference is that he is one of the French writers who do give the very best value for money. He has that infinite capacity for taking pains which is the synonym of genius. He is a very hard worker. Even in his journalistic pursuits, in the hack work to which circumstances constrain him, he displays enormous energy. I have often watched him at work in the Café Napolitain, where, with scissors and paste-pot, one may see him engaged for hours over some article for one of the papers. The bejewelled fingers working with the gum brush and blue pencil afford a curious insight into the profession of letters in Paris of the day. He has a pretty knack of draughtsmanship, too, and caricature, and the other day sketched himself for me with two or three rapid strokes of the pen.

He is one of those writers who "arrive" too soon. He was only twenty-two when he found all Paris speaking about him. That was in 1896, when he had published his famous "Les Nuits, Les Ennuis et les Amis de nos plus notoires Contemporains," which he wrote after leaving his post as private secretary to Anatole France. Since then he has written many books of almost uncanny cleverness. "L'Imitation de Notre Maître Napoleon" (1897), "L'Holocauste" (1898), "L'Inimitable" (1899), "Demi-Volupté" (1900), "Sérénissime" (1900), "Cinq Ans Chez les Sauvages" (1901), "Le Boulevard" (1906), "Le Forçat Honoraire" (1907). He has also written two plays, *Les Ruines* and *La Dynastie*; a novel called "L'Épee au Fourreau," a study entitled "La Verité sur Salomé," a political satire, "Rocaroc, homme d'Etat," and many essays. Besides all these works he has collaborated steadily on the *Journal* since 1896, and is a constant contributor to the *Figaro*, the *Gil Blas*, the *Revue Blanche*, the *Phalange* and other papers. I have given some account of this wonderful young man—he is only thirty-five this year—because I feel sure that he will eventually attain a great reputation in France.

He is one of the few Frenchmen of letters who still delight to work in *cafés*. When I first went to Paris it was rather the thing to do for a journalist, to use his house of call as his study. Old Mr Crawford, the husband of Mrs Crawford, of *Truth*, who was correspondent of *The Daily News*, used to write his correspondence every evening in the Café Veron, at the corner of the Rue Vivienne. Two wax candles and *tout ce qu'il fallait pour ecrire* used to be placed on a table specially reserved for the correspondent. Sue used to correct the proofs of "Les Mystères de Paris" in the saloons of the Jockey Club and got disliked for it. Timothy Trimm wrote his daily *chronique* for the then new *Petit Journal* in a Parisian *café*, and people used to go and stare at the man who was so clever as to be able to turn out an article on a fresh subject every day of the week. In consequence of which popularity, Trimm got an exaggerated sense of his own importance, and imposed such demands on the proprietors of the *Petit Journal* that they were forced to dispense with his services.

The Café Napolitain, where Lajeunesse usually works, used at one time to be the favourite rendezvous of the men of letters and actors of Paris, who collected there between the hours of five and seven, "the green hour," as it is called. Catulle Mendés was a frequent guest, and Courteline, and Sylvain the actor, and numerous French and foreign journalists and literary camp-followers, including one or two poor fellows who belonged to what are called in Paris the "negroes" of literature. These are the hacks, the "ghosts," the men who write the books, plays and articles of well-known men, who are either too lazy to write themselves, or who have exhausted everything except the commercial value of their names. I knew one man there who used to write serial stories for the big dailies, on behalf of a well-known *feuilletoniste*, who remunerated him at the rate of one penny for ten lines. He thus might have described himself as a centime-a-liner. His employer, the man who put his name to the tale, drew from five to ten pence a line for the copy he had thus obtained. But there are "negroes" in Paris who work for even less than that. Women are often employed at this cruel work.

Mendés once told us of his experience as a "ghost." When he first came to Paris, as quite a young man, he brought with him from Toulouse a one-act play called *My Wife's Garters*, which he had written after leaving school and which had been successfully played at the Capitole Theatre there. Being very hard up, after his arrival in Paris, he accepted an offer of four pounds outright for this play, and transferred it to a certain well-known poet. The poet changed the name, struck out two or three lines and had it produced under his own name at a boulevard theatre. It was very popular, and still holds the boards in the provinces at *cafés*-concerts and small suburban theatres.

George Courteline, by the way, was always to be seen in Mendés' company. They made a curious couple, so entirely different was their work, so divergent were their talents. Courteline is a man of great if coarse humour, specially successful in writing about soldiers and government clerks, bureaucrats. He obtained his knowledge of these types from his own experience. He served three years, "three most miserable years," as a dragoon, and he was afterwards for some time employed at the Direction des Cultes in the Ministry of Religion. His father was Jules Moineaux, who made himself famous, as a police-court reporter, by publishing an amusing series of fanciful sketches of police-court cases, under the title of "Les Tribunaux Comiques." He had, however, no faith in literature as a profession, and used his influence to get a berth for George where he would earn a regular income and in due course become entitled to a pension. But having fallen in, early in his career, with Catulle Mendés, Courteline, who had already produced a military *saynette*, called *Lidoire*, at the Théâtre Libre, collaborated with him in a big piece called *The Merry Wives of Paris*, which was produced at one of the principal theatres. It was successful and produced money. Then Courteline adapted his very funny story "Bourbouroche" for the Théâtre Antoine. It made a great hit. The great scene was where the husband, searching for his wife's lover in her bedroom, in the dark, suddenly sees a bright light shining through the chinks of a big wardrobe which is standing in the room. He throws the doors of the cupboard open and discloses the young man, sitting at a table, with a reading-lamp, perusing a novel, the *armoire* being his usual hiding-place when his disappearance became necessary owing to matrimonial exigencies.

Paris found this hugely amusing, and I do not think I ever heard an audience laugh more heartily than when Bourbouroche found himself staring at the "other man," who insisted on having all his comforts even in the fevers and turmoil of adulterous loves. After that Courteline thought himself justified in giving up his desk at the Ministry of Religion, but at the same time stipulated with his superiors that if literature failed him he might return to his bureaucratic security. This fortunately never became necessary. Courteline could always be recognised by the fact that he never went abroad without carrying under his arm a huge leather portfolio, crammed with manuscripts, a *portefeuille Ministre,* such as politicians carry, *pour se donner de l'importance* (to look important).

Jean Moréas was an occasional visitor to the Café Napolitain, mainly for the purpose of meeting Sylvain, the actor, who produced his play *Iphigénie* in various open-air theatres in the provinces. I remember seeing it played at Algiers, where it was greatly applauded, and was pleased to be able to congratulate a very old friend on his triumph. Moréas had been carrying *Iphigénie* round in his head for many years before it was finally put into shape. On many noctambulous walks with Jean Moréas had I heard him declaiming lines which rang out sonorously under the bright African sun and carried me back to the days of *Sturm und Drang*. In those days people used to laugh at Moréas, and to-day he ranks as one of the first poets in France, and wears the rosette of officer of the Legion of Honour in his buttonhole, a distinction which de Goncourt did not obtain until he was long past sixty years of age. I remember how indignantly Zola spoke of Moréas once. Moréas had said something about "Victor Hugo and I." This roused Zola's ire. "What's this Moréas?" he cried. "What has he done, then, goodness gracious, to have such a colossal cheek. 'Victor Hugo and I!' Can you imagine it? Isn't it sheer madness! He has written three or four little songs of sorts, things like Béranger wrote, neither more nor less: the rest of his work is the output of a crazy grammarian, twisted, complicated, inept, with nothing fresh or youthful in it: it's poetry in spirits of wine."

Mendés was a much kindlier man in his criticisms and was always ready—which Zola never was—to welcome new talent. His remark on Moréas at the time when everybody was discussing the young Franco-Greek poet was that "there was talent in Moréas, who delights in little discoveries in language. Moréas, whose archaism modernises itself, and is spiced with a touch of exoticism, interests me, to tell the truth, very considerably. He has found some curious rhythms." Poor Verlaine admitted that he was jealous of Moréas, whom he claimed as his pupil. "I have had pupils," he said, "but I consider them as scholars who have revolted against me. Moréas, *au fond*, is one of them. I am a bird myself—just as Zola, by the way, is an ox—and there are some evil tongues who say I have created a school of *sérins*" (canaries). "'Tis false, the symbolists are birds also, certain exceptions being made. Moréas is one also, but, no—he may rather be described as a peacock."

One is to imagine poor Verlaine half-drunk with absinthe saying this involved and complicated critical phrase in the Café François Premier. The word *sérins*, by the way, is difficult of translation into English, though its exact meaning is the one put in brackets—namely, canaries. But *sérin* means more than that. It means a "duffer," a stupid person who has to be taught just as a canary is taught with a bird-organ, a dense person who can only learn anything by having it repeated to him over and over again. I remember Zola once telling me that he made a rule, when attending a rehearsal of one of his plays, not to *sériner* his actors—that is to say, not to badger them with instructions repeated over and over again, not, in other words, to treat them as "duffers," but to allow them to exercise a little initiative.

In those days the Café Napolitain was one of the few *cafés* left in Paris which were made regular houses of call by certain steady customers, a *café* with what the Germans would call "Stamm-Gaeste." The habit of going regularly to *cafés*, which used to be a feature of Parisian life, has quite died out. For one thing the coffee served at most Parisian *cafés* is not fit to drink, and as to alcoholic drinks, though absinthe drinking prevails, people don't like to be seen sitting for any length of time in any one particular *café* with a glass of ardent spirits before them. The absinthe drinker takes his first drink at one *café*, his second somewhere else and his tenth or twelfth at some tenth or twelfth other *café*. I knew a very distinguished musician, brother of one of the principal theatre managers in Paris, who used to start off at the Café Napolitain and finish up at the Gare du Nord, in the identical little Swiss *brasserie* which was one of the scenes in Courteline's *Bourbouroche*. He

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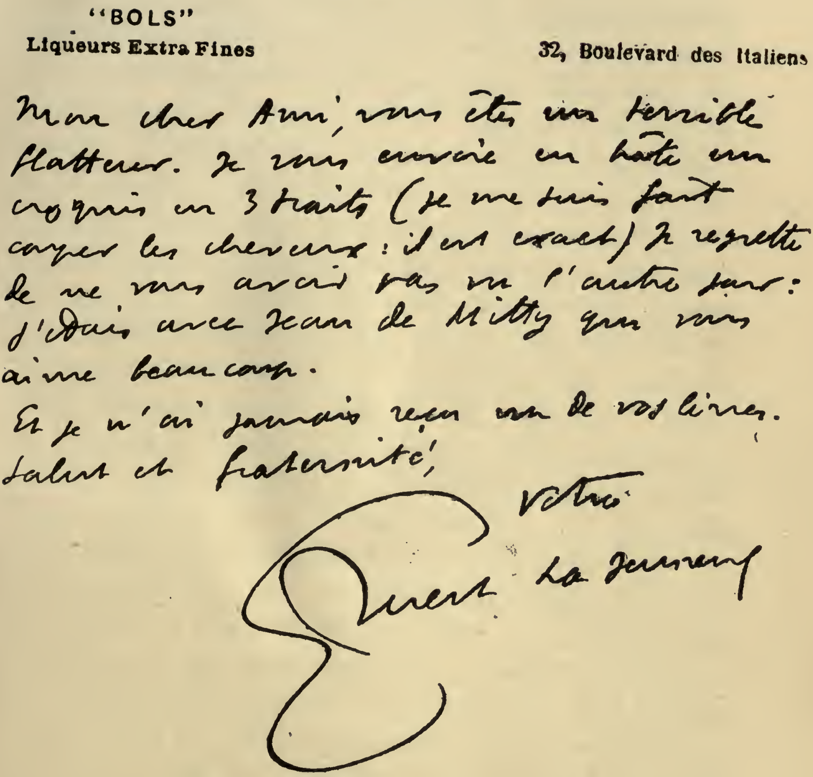

"BOLS"
Liqueurs Extra Fines
32, Boulevard des Italiens

Mon cher Ami, vous êtes un terrible flatteur. Je vous envoie en hâte un croquis en 3 traits (je me suis fait couper les cheveux : il est exact) Je regrette de ne vous avoir pas vu l'autre jour : j'étais avec Jean de Mitty qui vous aime beaucoup.

Et je n'ai jamais reçu un de vos livres.

Salut et fraternité,

votre

Ernest La Jeunesse

FACSIMILE OF A LETTER FROM ERNEST LA JEUNESSE TO AUTHOR.

face page 112.

always asked for *un lait chaud* (a glass of hot milk) and the waiters knew what he wanted instead.

What I say about *cafés* refers mainly to those in the centre of the town on the boulevards. In the suburbs and outlying districts *cafés* are still made places of call by the *bourgeois* of the quarter. Here they sip their *mazagrans* or their "bocks" and here they play *manille*. I remember a *café* in the Rue Vicq d'Azir, at the corner of the boulevard, where there met every evening a respectable party of middle-aged men, who, according to the old lady who kept the place, had been coming there regularly for more than twenty years. The principal figure in this group was old Father Deibler, the executioner, who never missed an evening's cards, unless he was engaged in the provinces. After his retirement he came there every night, and people used to come and stare at the sinister old man, who rather enjoyed the curiosity evinced. To the last he kept alive his interest in his life-work, and frequently accompanied his son, Monsieur Anatole, who had succeeded to him, to pay a visit to Louison, the guillotine, in her shed hard by. Louison wanted a good deal of care to keep her fit and well, and Father Deibler used to help his son in his duties towards her. Anatole, by the way, is a total abstainer and does not drink or go to *cafés*. He says he has seen too much of the consequences of drinking to care to try it himself.

These principles would not have found much favour with the late Monsieur Henner, the great artist. Henner had a very high opinion of the advantage of drinking good liquor, especially wine. He said good wine was good for the health and good for inspiration. As he lived to an old age and did excellent work—of its kind—to the end, his opinion may be worth remembering. He used to speak with much contempt of the young men of the day, who, when dining out with a lady, ask for a bottle of mineral waters, and he once said to me that when he was a young man, if he had ventured to ask a young lady to share a bottle of mineral water with him at dinner, she would very soon have shown him to the door.

Henner's favourite wine was Burgundy, a taste which he shared with President Loubet, with whom in his lifetime he cracked many a dusty bottle of Beaune. A good bottle of Beaune always exercised an irresistible temptation over the President. I remember once being in his wake when in March 1904 he visited the Agricultural Show. I had heard him refuse various offers of hospitality in the different sections, in each of which a "lunch" had been spread for the President's refreshment. He said, and kept saying, that by his doctor's orders he could take nothing "between meals." However, when the presidential party reached the wine-growers' section there was an uncorking of bottles at every stall. Monsieur Loubet smilingly refused all these hospitable offers, but one grower, a Burgundian, more pushing than the rest, begged him at least to smell the bouquet of a glass of pale ruby-coloured wine which he had poured out with ever so much care from a dust-covered bottle. The President put his nose to it; his features relaxed, and with his eternal smile more genial than ever, said: "I really think that I must taste this. The doctor can say what he likes. I have really never smelled anything so delicious as this, and Burgundy is my favourite wine." It was a bottle of Beaune which had been laid down just thirty-nine years previously.

The President was, of course, quite right, doctor or no doctor, to refuse to drink red wine between meals, which is a fatal thing to do, and on many constitutions has the exact effect of an emetic. I am always amused when I read in English novels how the hero quaffs claret between meals, while smoking a cigar. Poor Keats among real people used to declare it the joy of his life to quaff claret between meals—a habit which no doubt accelerated the breakdown of his constitution. The English novelists, by the way, often write very strange things when they deal with wines and the elegancies of the table. I remember how in " The Wrecker," a novel written by Stevenson in collaboration with Lloyd Osbourne, there is an account of how a man, who had been hard up for a long time in the Latin Quarter, indulged himself, after getting a remittance, in a feast at the Café de Cluny, at which figured specially a bottle of old Roussillon wine. It occurred to me that neither R. L. S. nor his collaborator can have known much about French wines, or they would never have selected that particular *cru*—even supposing it could be found on the wine list of a good *café*—as a table wine. Roussillon is a strong heady vintage, which is never drunk pure, except in the Roussillon district, but is used to "cut"—*i.e.* to blend with light wines which need body. Many of the clarets one gets in not quite first-class English hotels have been doctored with Roussillon. It much resembles Spanish wine, and it has been said of it that one needs a knife and fork to it. It contains about 18% of alcohol. It is very cheap and common, and in the Roussillonnais district workpeople who want a real good fill of wine go to a dealer and for a payment of one penny per hour can go on drinking the whole day if they are so disposed. In Perpignan this arrangement is called *à la soulée*—that is to say, that for a penny a man can go on drinking until he is intoxicated! In other parts of France it is called *à la rincée.*

Amongst the most excellent things to be found in "The Wrecker," by the way, the description of Bohemian life in the Latin Quarter in Paris is particularly well done. The days of "La Vie de Bohème" are by no means, as has been said over and over again, past, and Doppelgängers of every one of the famous characters in Murger's book, not excepting Mimi Pinson, could be found to-day over and over again in the *hotels meublés* of that quarter. They dress a little less raggedly perhaps, and on the whole have more luxurious tastes, for Bohemia has marched with the times also, but there they are just the same. Here, for instance, is a scene which I witnessed not long ago, and which might have come straight out of the pages of "Vie de Bohème." I was walking down the Boulevard St Michel with a young Breton gentleman, who has recently given up the study of medicine for the practice of literature. It was not to be wondered at that his clothes should not be of the best. At the corner of the Rue de Cluny we came upon another man of letters, who, though rather shabby as to his hat and boots, wore a magnificent cloth overcoat. I recognised the man as a very well-known poet and writer, who contributes occasionally some most brilliant essays to the press, and who at one time was considered to be the coming man of Paris. As soon as my friend saw him he left my side and crossed over to him and an animated dialogue ensued between the two. I did not hear what they said, but they seemed to be both much excited. In the end, in answer to a particularly vehement speech on the part of the young Breton, the other was seen to unbutton his overcoat, disclosing therewith that he had nothing on between it and his shirt. My Breton friend presently joined me, and I asked him what the trouble was. "Oh! *ce cochon*," he said, "he's got my overcoat on. We lived together a few weeks ago, for we were collaborating. Just before we separated, X told me that as he had some business visits to pay, and as his clothes were too shabby, he would be much obliged to me if I would lend him my overcoat to put on over them so as to hide their tattered condition. I did so, and haven't seen him since until to-day. I wanted my coat back first, because I, too, am getting very rusty; and, secondly, because here's the winter coming when it will be needed. Well, he opens it and shows me that he is telling the truth when he says that he has nothing else to wear. He has sold his coat and waistcoat and couldn't go out in his shirt-sleeves. But he will find the money sure enough for his beer. He is the biggest drinker of 'bocks' in the *quartier*."

Apropos of "bocks," Henner always set his face against the fashion of beer drinking which, during the last twenty years, has so spread in Paris. He had the same objection to it that Bismarck had. The Iron Chancellor once said to me that the natural, rational drink of the North Germans was wine, and that it was beer that made them slow and ponderous. But the "bock" has come to stay in Paris, and the quantities of German beer consumed daily in the French metropolis are very large.

From the results of an inquiry made some little time ago amongst the leading brewers and brewers' agents, it transpired that during hot weather there are consumed every day in Paris 4,000,000 bocks. The bock is popularly supposed to contain one-third of a litre, or quart, but after the duty on beer was raised the glass or " bock " was altered, so that while looking the same as the old " bock," and apparently being of the same capacity, in reality it held rather less than a quarter of a litre or half-a-pint.

Apropos of beer drinking in Paris, I was amused the other day, on entering a *brasserie* on the Boulevard du Palais, to hear the manager telling a customer that, " to his great regret," he could not supply him with another *demi* (or pint) of beer. The man was very angry, but the manager remained firm, and the customer walked off and seated himself at a *brasserie* directly opposite, and was there seen to imbibe several *demis* one after the other. The manager watched him from the terrace of the *café* at which I was sitting, and announced in a loud voice the number of *demis* that his ex-customer was consuming. It appeared that when he had refused to serve him any further the man had put himself outside fifteen *demis*. Over the way he certainly drank five more while I was there, making a total of about eight quarts (for the *demi* does not hold a pint, though it is supposed to do so). I was amused at the terror of the manager, who seemed to expect to see the man explode or to fall down in a fit. I told him something of what I knew of the capacity of the human being for swallowing lager beer, illustrated from my experience as a student in Germany, who have taken part in many a *Kommers*, where sixty *Seidels* was not considered at all an excessive *consommation* for one evening's *Schmaus*. I told him of the heroic doings of the Beer King at Bonn, who used to come up to the University, in a fourth-class carriage, sitting astride on a huge vat of beer, and I described to him the real nature of a Beer Journey, where a band of students travel from town to town, absorbing at each halting-place the most phenomenal quantities of lager. He said that he would only be too glad to receive customers of that kind in his house, men who were hardened to excessive beer drinking; but that as to the gentleman *en face*, he knew that he could not stand more than a certain quantity, after which he became *bassinant*, and desired to fight all the men and to kiss all the women. He added that the demand for "bocks" was very large just then, and that he had no reason to complain (for the managers in these establishments have a percentage on the sale of the beer), and that in his house four thousand "bocks" were retailed daily. The biggest sale of beer at one house in Paris is recorded at six thousand "bocks." This is considered very large, but the quantity will make many an English publican smile with pity.

It was at this particular *café* that I had once a long conversation on the vexed question of Chartreuse with a specialist in liqueurs. Said he: "The genuine stuff is that manufactured at Tarragona and sold as the 'Liqueur des Pères Chartreux.' The non-genuine stuff is that manufactured at the monastery, whence the Carthusian monks were expelled. This is sold as 'Grande Chartreuse.' It has no resemblance with the real article." The government trustees who "annexed" the monks' property and confiscated their trade-mark put a number of skilful analysts to work on samples of Chartreuse with a view to discovering the monks' secret recipe. After long investigations, and presumably frequent sampling *dégustations*, or tastings, the analysts proclaimed that they had found out what were the ingredients used in the making of the liqueur and the exact doses of each. As, however, there are over one hundred ingredients used, one is inclined to doubt this statement.

The Father Superior of the Carthusians, who has since vindicated in an English court his right to the trade-mark "Chartreuse," left France with the laugh on his side against the government *liquidateur*. He communicated to the press, the day after he was expelled from the monastery, a letter which he had written to the government official. It referred to the large stock of grape-brandy which the trustee had taken over with the rest of the property. By the way, the real secret of the superiority of Chartreuse as a liqueur has always been the use of the very finest old grape-cognac. "You stole my alcohol," wrote the reverend father, "and you intend to use it in the manufacture of a liqueur in imitation of ours. I think it therefore right to remind you that the alcohol being my property, I was at liberty to treat it as I chose, before I left the monastery." In other words the Father Superior hinted that all the alcohol in the Carthusian cellars might have been poisoned, or that one barrel or bottle might be so, it being left to the *liquidateur* to find out which barrels or barrel or bottle had been thus doctored. Of course as a matter of fact nothing of the kind had been done, but the trustee felt that he could not run the risk of using the brandy without analysing the contents of every cask and flagon in the cellars. It was also a very bad advertisement as a send-off for the imitation liqueur. Paris was hugely amused with the Parthian shaft and many people no doubt thought it more prudent to abstain from drinking Chartreuse until the monks brought out their new liqueur.

CHAPTER VIII

Ruins at Sixpence—Authors and Second-hand Booksellers—Marmier's Bequest—A modest *Trouvaille*—Mary Queen of Scots' Prison Reading—Anatole France on the Quays—How he discovered Moréas—Anatole France in the Avenue Hoche—His placid Anarchism—Property, Theft—Pierre Louÿs and "Aphrodite"—Jean Lorrain and the *Roman à clef*—Paul Adam and his Work—Meredith and the Interviewer—Meredith and Daudet—Meredith's Claret—Sienkiewicz's Mineral Water—How "Quo Vadis?" was conceived—Red Ink and Violet—Bernard Lazare and Dreyfus—The Dreyfus Interviewer—Jules Huret—"The King of Interviewers"—A Wife's Tribute—Huret's Journalistic Records—His "Inquiries"—Spuller and Huret—Monsieur Couteaux—The Professor and the Chop—Economist and *Chef*—"*Liévre a la Royale*"

Whenever I went to the *café-brasserie* on the Boulevard du Palais, referred to in the preceding chapter, which I always did when there was a big trial on at the adjoining law courts, I used to notice a hawker—I had seen him in other parts of Paris also—who did excellent business amongst the lawyers, barristers and students who frequented the house. His must be a familiar figure to those who sit out on the *terrasses* of the *cafés* in Paris. As he walks along he cries out in doleful tones, "Here is the Ruin of the publishing trade! Here is the Despair of authors! At sixpence each! At sixpence!" He is commonly known as "*La Ruine des Editeurs.*" A jovial fellow withal, by no means showing like a prophet of woe. His business is to buy up publishers' remnants, and to retail them to the best advantage. Thanks to his clever patter, and to his skill in selecting only books with "fetching" titles, he is always able to dispose of his bundle of yellow backs before midnight. I took a *petit verre* with him the other night at a *marchand de vins*, in the Rue de la Paix, and learned that it was "a bad day on which he did not make his couple of louis." How many authors here can say the same! He looks on literature only as merchandise, and "never read a book; not he." He had something else to do. I consulted him as to titles, but I dare not print what he said on the subject.

I have often wondered at the kindly feeling that authors entertain towards second-hand booksellers, a feeling which I consider much to our credit. For after all the *bouquinistes* are our natural enemies. The second-hand bookstall is the knacker's yard of a literary reputation, and to the second-hand bookseller the great author is even less of a hero than to his valet. Yet we like second-hand bookshops, and eagerly read their catalogues. Is it perhaps because we want to see how our dear colleagues are faring, how many of X's "grand new work" are being disposed of as "new remainders," and for how many pence Y's latest novel, which was to startle the world, is being offered "newly rebound"? I don't know and won't say. I only know that the feeling is there.

Some men develop real friendships for the *bouquinistes*. One great literary man, Xavier Marmier, left one thousand francs to be divided amongst the book-hawkers on the quays. However, as Marmier, by his own account, purchased for a mere song on one occasion, from one of these *bouquinistes*, some volumes which were valued at many thousand francs, his legacy might be considered rather an act of justice—

a kind of posthumous conscience-money—than as anything else.

Apropos of such bargains, it is still quite possible to pick up very good things at very low prices on the quays, but the opportunities require watching and patience. You may walk daily for a year from the Pont-Royal to the Pont St Michel and examine every box of books on the way, without coming across anything worth purchasing. Again, when you least expect a find, you may come across one. I remember one afternoon, after dining at the Café d'Orsay, turning over a pile of old books at a stall just opposite that *café* and coming upon a volume for which the dealer asked me one franc. I purchased it at that price, but a few minutes later repented of my bargain, because I felt it "real mean" to profit by the ignorance of a very shabby and hungry-looking retailer, returned and offered to take back my franc in exchange for the volume. My motive was, however, totally misunderstood, and the shabby and hungry-looking dealer absolutely refused to annul the bargain. "What is sold is sold," he said, "that is all I know," and scoffed at my pretensions. The book was a first edition of Stendhal's "L'Amour," and very rare. I was offered one hundred and twenty francs for it the same afternoon by a bookseller in the Rue de Castiglione. I have since occasionally had *trouvailles* of the same sort, but on the whole it is hardly remunerative to go hunting for bargains on the Paris quays. The *bouquinistes* are terribly sharp.

Apropos of *trouvailles*, I remember the delight with which Pierre Louÿs informed me one day, how in hunting through one of the public libraries in Paris he had come across a certain copy of Ronsard's

"Hymnes" which he had every reason to believe was the identical copy which consoled poor Mary Stuart in her captivity. It may be remembered that when the luckless Queen of Scots was asked whether she wished for a Bible to read in prison, she replied that her volume of Ronsard sufficed her. The volume which came into Pierre Louÿs' hands was, according to the catalogue, purchased in England. On the fly-leaf it bore in female workmanship the inscription: "Per far' il mio cattivo tempo piu suave." There was also other contributory evidence to the origin of the book.

Anatole France retains his fondness for the quays and the bookshops there. In him book-hunting is hereditary and instinctive. His father for over fifty years kept a bookshop on the Quai Voltaire and it was in this bookshop that young Thiébault stored his mind with that erudition which has since stood him in such excellent stead. One often sees him flitting round on the quays, chatting with the *bouquinistes*, or looking into the shops of the publishers and booksellers.

It was after such a visit to the quays that he wrote the famous article in *Le Temps* which raised Jean Moréas out of comparative obscurity into fame and prominence. In France one newspaper article signed by somebody in whom the French public has confidence can make a man's reputation. I hardly think that the same can be said of the English press, "What one lit'ry feller says about another lit'ry fellow," said once a great city magnate to me, while I was lunching with him at the Baltic, "is not agoing to influence my opinion, sir." But in France it is different, and one has not forgotten how both Maeterlinck and Pierre Louÿs were put up into full view by two articles written by Octave Mirbeau.

That day Anatole France had been into Vanier's bookshop on the quays and in conversation Vanier had mentioned to the writer that he had in the press a volume entitled "Le Pélérin Passionné" by one Jean Moréas, of which he spoke with the temperate enthusiasm of a publisher. France asked to see some of the proofs, and Vanier having brought him a seat sat down and read and read and read. Then he went home and proclaimed that a great poet was living in France to whom, so far, justice had not been done. *Et voilà!*

The last occasion when I saw Anatole France was last year, just after I had returned from Egypt, full of emotion from reading his wonderful "Thaïs." It had been my companion in the desert, and with "Thaïs" in hand I had paced over Alexandria tracing the steps of that wonderful courtesan. I met France at the house of Madame Arman-Caillavet, whither I was taken by Loie Fuller. France is a very old friend of the Caillavet family, very rich people, who have placed their house at his disposal. The arrangement reminds one of the splendid days of the old *régime* when the *grands seigneurs*, and especially the *grandes dames*, had in their houses always an apartment at the disposal of some poet. La Fontaine, for instance—for whom, by the way, the highest admiration is entertained nowadays in literary Paris—lived most of his life, first as the guest of one *grande dame* and then of another. When a patroness died he moved his traps to some other lady's mansion, on one occasion without waiting for an invitation, so sure was he of a welcome. France has a room in the house in the Avenue Hoche where he works as though at home. Amongst Madame de Caillavet's most prized treasures are France's manuscripts. I remember with what reverence I examined the beautiful script of "Thaïs," bound in luxurious style like some rich monastic tome. It interested me to note, by the way, that the last page showed signs of hurried writing. The penmanship was not so careful, the pen seemed to have been agitated, and I could well understand the reason. "The terrible weight of the pen," said Zola once. When one is within sight of the end of one's task the pen gallops, just as a tired horse does who sees the gate, the stable-door, the roof behind the trees.

I need hardly describe the elegance, the wit, the learning of the author of "Le Crime de Sylvestre Bonnard," nor how he delighted us that Sunday afternoon. One thing, however, which he said, made some impression on me, and that is where he declared himself an anarchist in spirit. We had been speaking of Cairo and the Americans, and I had related an instance of how the financial crisis in the States had entirely wrecked certain fortunes. During my stay in Cairo a lady had driven up to the Crédit —— in a motor and entering had asked the director of the Bureau des Étrangers to let her draw several thousand *piastres* on her letter of credit, which was issued by one of the Fifth Avenue Trusts, a letter of thirty or forty thousand dollars. The manager was forced to tell her that he could not pay her anything on her letter, as he had that morning received notification from headquarters that the trust in question had the previous day suspended its payments. The unfortunate woman's despair was pitiful to behold. She was without a single penny, her hotel bill was unpaid, the very motor at the door was a hired one. She was suddenly hurled from great affluence into the most distressful poverty. I believe that she made some attempt to commit suicide, but that in the end another American lady came to her rescue and supplied her with sufficient funds to return home to the States. But to this *denouément* France would not listen, for he had interrupted me, saying: "How can one take any interest in such misfortunes? That money, no doubt, was stolen money. The case inspires no sympathy. All such fortunes are, perforce, dishonestly acquired. It would be a good thing if the same catastrophe might await every rich person. I declare I despise rich people, *les gens bien*, and I wish no more to frequent them. Indeed, I have determined no longer to go into society, I do not wish to meet people of that sort." In saying which, France was, of course, only paraphrasing the famous remark of Pierre Proudhon, who answered his own question: "What is Property?" with "Property is Theft." And of course Proudhon was the author of the "Système des contradictions économiques."

When one reads over "Thaïs" one cannot help feeling how greatly this book must have inspired Pierre Louÿs in writing his famous "Aphrodite," which deals also with a courtesan in Alexandria, a book of which the success has been phenomenal, and which has always interested me specially because I saw Louÿs write it. I think he called it "Chryseis" in those days. He used to come to see me in the Rue Lafayette and read me passages of his Gothic manuscript.

I should much have liked to give the portrait of Pierre Louÿs, the Rubempré of modern Paris, in these pages, and wrote to him to ask him for one of his photographs. His reply was amusing and characteristic. I give it in the original French :

"16 *Juin*, 1909.

"MON CHER AMI,—Je n'ai pas fait faire ma photographie depuis le siècle dernier et je ne laisse même pas vendre celles de jadis chez les marchands. Personne ne connaît mon visage. Alors savez-vous ce que vous devriez faire ? Prenez un citoyen de Guilsborough ou de Brixworth, autant que possible un révérend, avec une tête respectable et grave, une grande chaîne de montre sur un gilet obèse, et une Bible noire à la main : ou mieux avec une Concordance de la Bible : la Concordance est plus grosse.—Faîtes le photographier, et écrivez dessous : PIERRE LOUŸS. Comme on ne me connaît pas la ressemblance n'importe guére. Mais je compte sur votre amitié pour choisir un modèle tout à fait respectable.

"Songez qu'à l'heure actuelle je n'ai pas un ami à Londres. Depuis quinze ans je n'ai passé que trois jours à Charing Cross ou aux environs, et la seule relation que j'aie au dela de la Manche est un certain libraire de Tunbridge Wells à qui je télegraphie de temps en temps pour lui acheter des incunables mais ce libraire même ne m'a jamais vu.

"Vous avez fait cette année en Angleterre une perte immense : Swinburne. C'était le plus grand poëte vivant. Quand je pense qu'il m'écrivait quand j'avais 19 ans, qu'il a collaboré à ma première revue, et que pendant vingt ans je l'ai laissé mourir sans aller le voir, je ne m'en console pas. Quinze jours avant sa mort ne le croyant pas malade j'avais proposé aux meilleurs poëtes français de faire une manifesta-

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16 juin 1909

29 RUE DE BOULAINVILLIERS
☎ 683-64

Mon cher ami

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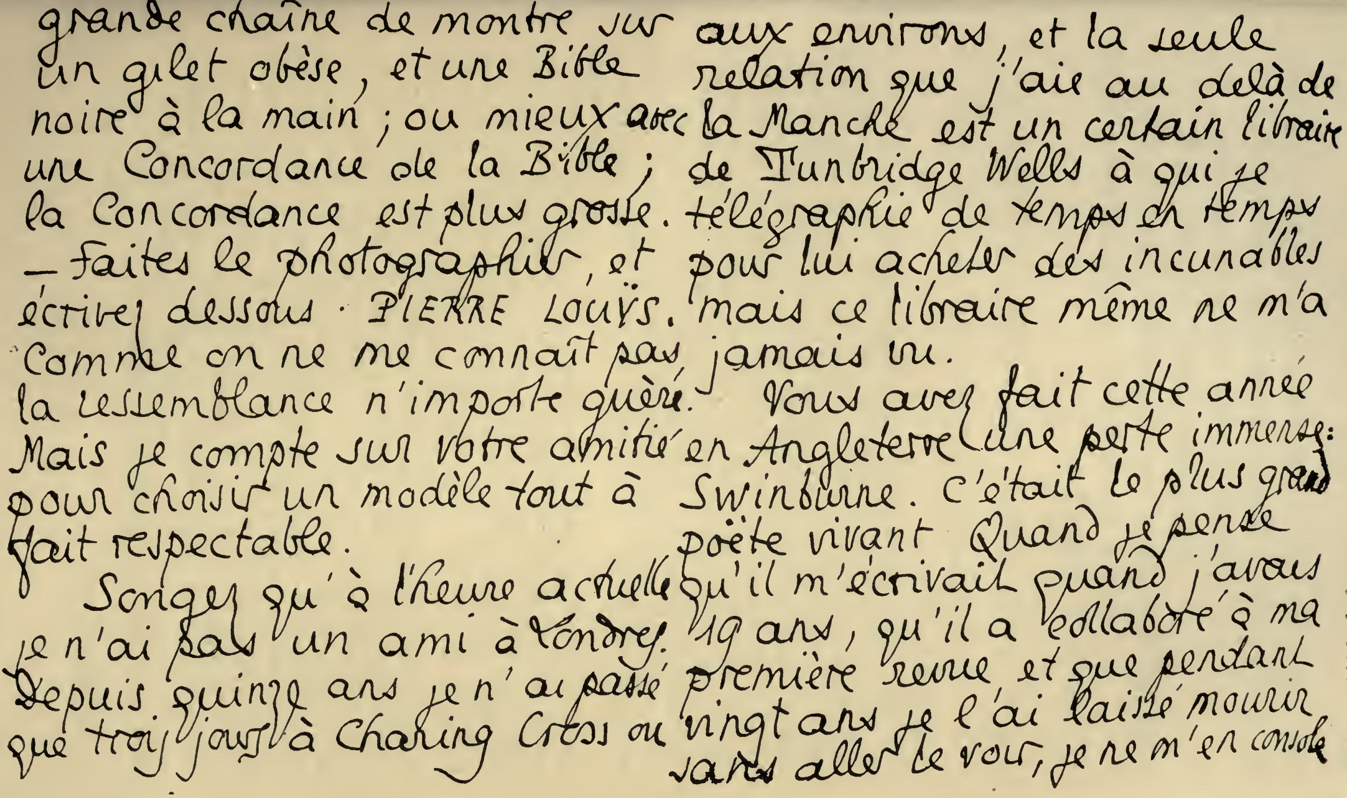
pas. Quinze jours avant sa mort, ne le croyant pas malade j'avais proposé aux meilleurs poètes français de faire une manifestation à sa gloire, — pour protester contre son exclusion du Prix Nobel. Je voulais composer une anthologie qui aurait paru sous ce titre très simple : « Vers présentés à Mr Swinburne ». Et comme je recevais mes premières réponses, Swinburne est mort.

Amicalement à vous

Pierre Louÿs. —



grande chaîne de montre sur
un gilet obèse, et une Bible
noire à la main ; ou mieux avec
une Concordance de la Bible ;
la Concordance est plus grosse.
— Faites le photographier, et
écrivez dessous · PIERRE LOUŸS.
Comme on ne me connaît pas,
la ressemblance n'importe guère.
Mais je compte sur votre amitié
pour choisir un modèle tout à
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Songez qu'à l'heure actuelle
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FACSIMILE OF LETTER FROM PIERRE LOUŸS, AUTHOR OF "APHRODITE," ETC., TO THE AUTHOR.

To face page 129.

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"'Vers présentés à Mr Swinburne.'

"Et comme je recevais mes premières réponses, Swinburne est mort. Amicalement à vous,

"Pierre Louÿs."[1]

He has always been a very elegant young man, a dandy of letters. His wedding—when he married one of the daughters of José-Maria de Heredia—was a Paris event. Pierre Louÿs wore a frock-coat with a black velvet collar. He had a mauve tie, and his "continuations" were of pearl-grey. François Coppée was one of his witnesses, and amongst other very distinguished and literary folk present were René Maizeroy, Jean de Mitty, Paul Hervieu, Abel Hermant, Sully-Prudhomme and Auguste Dorchain. A new colour for ladies' dresses was introduced to Paris on that occasion, a "kind of dying cherry," or "sick monkey," as Jean Lorrain was told by the Princesse de Caraman-Chimay.

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[1] This is the translation of Pierre Louÿs' amusing letter :

16th *June* 1909.

"My dear Friend,—I have not been photographed since last century, and don't even allow the photographs that used to be in the shops to be sold any more. Nobody knows what I look like. So I'll tell you what you ought to do. Take some citizen of Guilsborough or Brixworth, a reverend gentleman as far as possible, with a grave and respectable head, a big watch-chain across an obese waistcoat, and a black Bible in his hand ; or, better still, a Concordance. The Concordance is a bigger volume. Have him photographed, and write underneath it, Pierre Louÿs. As nobody knows what I look like, the non-resemblance will be of no importance. But I rely on your friendship to choose somebody who is altogether respectable.

"Fancy, that to-day I have not a single friend in London. During the last fifteen years I have only spent three days at Charing Cross, or in its neighbourhood, and the only connection I have on the other side of the Channel is a certain bookseller at Tunbridge Wells, to whom from time to time I telegraph to buy incunables. But this bookseller does not even know me by sight.

"You have had an immense loss in England this year—Swinburne. He was the greatest living poet. When I think that he used to write to me when I was nineteen years old, that he contributed to my first review, and that during twenty years I have been allowing him to die without going to see him, I cannot console myself. A fortnight before his death, not knowing that he was ill, I had asked our best French poets to make a manifestation in his honour, so as to protest against his having been excluded from the Nobel Prize. I wished to get together an anthology which would have borne this simple title:

"'Verses offered to Mr Swinburne.'

"And just as the first answers were coming in, Swinburne died. Yours amicably,

"Pierre Louÿs."

In choosing François Coppée as a witness, Pierre Louÿs, I suppose, wished to disassociate himself from the bulk of the *intellectuels* who, as will be remembered, had almost *en bloc* sided with the party of Captain Dreyfus. Coppée to the end remained in the opposite camp. He was a staunch Catholic, a pious and devout man, and recognised the fact that the Freemasons were taking advantage of the Dreyfus blunder to direct their operations against the Church in France, with what deplorable and complete success one sees only too well to-day. Louÿs did not pronounce himself on one side or the other.

The death of Jean Lorrain removed from Paris one of its cleverest writers, and also a man who was corruption personified. Lorrain combined the craft of journalist with the art of novelist, and made his observations of living people acquired in his profession as a *chroniqueur* serve him when he came to write his stories. These are professionals of the pen whom it is as well to avoid. It is the kind of work that was so successfully carried out in "The Green Carnation" and in "The Silver Domino." Lorrain's books were all *romans à clef*, and caricatured with little mercy well-known living people. I remember a series of stories which should have appealed to the author of "The Green Carnation." They were about a debauched Russian nobleman living at Nice, and amongst the characters in this story he introduced an English poet, whose name he gave as "Algernon Filde," painting, according to the popular odium, a picture of an unhappy man who died very miserably in Paris in 1900.

I was present one day in the police courts when Jean Lorrain was being prosecuted, both civilly and criminally, for an offence of this sort. He had published a short story in *Le Journal*, entitled "Portrait d'Artiste," in which he had caricatured a woman. The woman was not "having any," and had summoned both the author and the proprietors of the paper. Jean Lorrain was sentenced to a heavy fine, to three months' imprisonment and ordered to pay the plaintiff two thousand pounds. This sentence was naturally modified in the upper court. Jean Lorrain did not serve any time, nor did he have to disburse anything—that duty devolving on the proprietors of the paper, who were made co-responsible. But it showed us what opinion was held by certain Parisian magistrates of that kind of literary enterprise, and I remember feeling sorry that the same sort of reprobation is not to be found in England.

This prosecution did not help Lorrain at all. The days have gone by in France when police-court proceedings are the best advertisement that a book can receive. Prosecution no doubt helped "Madame Bovary," but then that prosecution failed. Occasionally the officials who instigate these trials render real services to literature by drawing public attention to men of talent who might otherwise be overlooked. I am sure nobody can bear any grudge against the clumsy *procureur* who, for instance, some years ago, ordered my friend Paul Adam to be prosecuted for writing and publishing a book called "Chair Molle." Adam was tried and acquitted and since then he has never looked back. He is now one of the most prominent writers in France, well considered by the government and growing rich in honours and fortune. When I first knew him many years ago in the Latin Quarter he was very poor, and engaged in what was apparently a hopeless struggle. But I always thought that he had it in him "to arrive." I was just as sure about his friend Jean Moréas, with whom he collaborated on a novel about life in the Latin Quarter, a book called "Les Demoiselles G——" (I forget the exact title). There was in this book a curious innovation in the matter of novel-writing. Midway the book was diversified with a poetical intermezzo which had no connection whatever with the tale. Adam has been a man of letters and nothing else for the past twenty-eight years. He is terribly in earnest. He has published nearly thirty novels, volumes of essays, and has written several plays. He contributes a weekly article to the *Journal* which rarely falls below three columns in length, and sometimes runs to five, and is, as they told me in the *Journal* office, one of the *chroniqueurs* who is most liked by their readers.

One of Adam's best books is his novel called "La Ruse." It deals with France in the years 1827 and 1828 and gives an animated picture of those troublous times, when the monarchy was menaced by the

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PAUL ADAM.
One of the most prominent writers in France.

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Bonapartists on the one hand and the Republicans on the other. Adam, who is a very hard worker, studied his period very carefully, and has been able effectively to reconstitute the atmosphere of those days. We are presented to a world of half-pay officers, grisettes, students and *carbonari*, and the descriptions are so minute and so carefully documented that we are able to realise the Paris of the period. A curious innovation on the author's part was to introduce into his book several characters taken from another famous novel, "Les Misérables." Has this ever been done before? I suppose that it was meant on Adam's part as an act of homage to the "master," as who would say: "No picture of that period could be complete without the characters which Hugo painted." And the effect is a good one. Everybody who has read "Les Misérables" will be glad to hear a little more about Enjolras, the student with the face of an archangel, of Grantaire, the heroic Bohemian and drunkard, of Combeferre and all the other members of the A.B.C. Club. Paul Adam continues them very skilfully, or rather, I should say, amplifies them, because Hugo had killed them all off, as readers will remember, except the least interesting of the lot, the priggish Marius. The title of the book proceeds, no doubt, from the fact that, in the period dealt with, "ruse" or cunning was the active factor in politics. We have a full account of the various secret societies which were plotting at that time and elaborate descriptions of the rituals of the Freemasons of the day. Is Paul Adam, by the way, a Freemason, and if so what will his brothers say about his divulgations of their secrets? There is one description of an extraordinary initiation ceremony in Italy, as to which one wonders whence the author got his particulars. The novice is crucified between the Bad Thief and the Good Thief. The Good Thief is represented by a corpse nailed to a crucifix. By a stage-trick, blood seems to be trickling from his hands.

The period with which "La Ruse" deals must have appealed specially to the author, for I remember that in his young days he used to affect the costume of 1830 and was the pioneer of the revival of the stock for neckwear, of which Edmond Rostand was so long the votary. In a recent confession book, Adam wrote that he is happiest when he is in the country "with books for friends, books for relations, the admirable, intelligent, consoling, joyous, mad, inspiring, sapient and ever new crowd of books." "Oh!" he cries, "why have I not a thousand eyes, a thousand brains so as to be able to read a thousand books simultaneously. All the rest is but life, poor life which is so ugly when it is not reflected in the mirror of literature." His favourite and indeed only pastime is the designing and painting of pictorial posters, many of which may be seen on the walls of Paris.

Paul Adam professes a great admiration for the novels of George Meredith. I remember how indignant he was when, during our voyage from Marseilles to Alexandria on the *Heliopolis*, I mentioned to him that Meredith had never made money by his writings in England, that his novels were not a "business proposition," and that one firm of publishers had relinquished the high honour and distinction of issuing these masterpieces because of the smallness of the profits to be gained therefrom.

Many years ago, I had been asked by the publishers of an American magazine to "interview" Meredith for their publication, and, though very reluctant to disturb the master with a proposal of that kind, I had sent the publishers' letter on to Box Hill, with a note saying that, if he had no objection, it would be a high honour and great pleasure to me to call on him, and to write the proposed article. He wrote back saying that he had no desire to further the interests of that particular firm of publishers, who only a short time previously had sent, in the form of a young and ardent lady admirer, a masked interviewer, who after enjoying his hospitality, and sharing his confidences, had gone off and had written "up" her visit to Box Hill. Otherwise, he said, he would have been glad for me to write about him, because he knew my work and was aware "that it was both discreet and competent." He would be very glad for me to come down to Box Hill, as his guest, if not as his interviewer, but that there was nothing to see there "except an unsuccessful novelist in a poor cottage." I did not go, being in some way prevented, nor was I able to accompany Alphonse Daudet down there when he paid his visit to the great English novelist. Daudet's account of it to me was striking. Meredith was waiting for him on the platform of the station, "and we two stricken men hobbled towards each other with outstretched arms, like great, wounded, lumbering birds."

My introduction to Meredith, by the way, came about in connection with Daudet's visit. I was seeing Daudet off on his return to Paris, and Meredith had come to Victoria Station to say good-bye to his French *confrère*. The two novelists had gripped hands heartily: the train began to move, and Daudet's hand being stiff with rheumatism, whilst Meredith's fingers were none too supple from his gouty affliction, the two men were unable to release their grasp. The train increased in speed and Meredith tottered on the brink of the platform. I could see an expression of great concern, almost consternation, on Daudet's face, so I acted promptly, and seizing Meredith round the waist with both arms simply yanked him back from Daudet's grip, and did not relinquish my hold till I had set him firmly on his tottering legs. Then he turned round to me and with his characteristic urbanity said, "To whom am I indebted for my timely rescue?"

He afterwards asked me to get into his carriage and to come a drive with him and Henry James, and I enjoyed thus the pleasure of listening to him for more than a couple of hours. Meredith talked the whole time, though James occasionally interpolated a remark. The old gentleman seemed to be deaf, or not to care to listen to what other people had to say. He seemed to *pontifier*, as the French say, to hold forth and to delight in listening to himself. I remember that we drove to the Army and Navy Stores and that he told me there that of his two indulgences, smoking and the drinking of claret, his doctor had forbidden the one that was dearest to him. "He will not allow me a drop of claret," he said. I felt very indignant with that doctor. It seemed hard to deprive an old poet of wine, and it occurred to me that Meredith might well have disregarded that prescription. However, as he lived for thirteen years longer, it is very probable that the doctor knew what he was doing, and I was taught a little lesson as to the advisability of not imagining oneself cleverer than specialists. All the same, one did not like to think of his being constrained to drink mineral waters, which contain very little joy, and mighty little inspiration.

I wonder, by the way, whether inspiration of a literary kind might not be derived from the "Ursus" natural aërated water. The "Ursus" water is the property of Henryk Sienkiewicz, the great Polish novelist, author of "Quo Vadis?" It is called "Ursus" after the character in the book, and the registered trade-mark is a representation of the Gothic Hercules. The spring was found on the estate which was presented to Sienkiewicz by a "national" subscription by the Poles, who felt great gratitude to him for showing the world that the Poles, after all, can do something else besides talk. Sienkiewicz, although an artist, was not indifferent to the prospects which this discovery held out, and promptly constructed bottling works on his estate, whence a large annual output of "Ursus" water now proceeds. I have some difficulty in thinking of the author of "Quo Vadis?" as a mineral water bottler. He is a very quiet, rather dyspeptic, refined-looking man, a typical Polish aristocrat, who seems happy only when lounging with a huge black cigar between his lips. I once had a long conversation with him at the villa of his friend, Monsieur Abdank, a Franco-American magnate connected with electrical enterprises, at whose house Sienkiewicz often visits. He told me that having gone to Africa to hunt, he had fallen ill of fever, and while lying on the pallet in his tent, in the remote wilds of the dark continent, he had been forced to listen to the nightly roarings of the lions. These ominous sounds had set him thinking of the arena in Rome, and by extension of Christian martyrdom. It was in this way that the idea came to him to write a book on Nero, and "Quo Vadis?" was the result. He told me that he had studied the period most carefully, which doubtless he did do in detail, although in reproducing the time-worn slanders about the Cæsar of the day he sacrificed truth to popular prejudice. Nero, of course, was not by any means so black a personage as he has been represented to be. He also told me that, though millions of copies of his book had been sold in America, he had never received any royalties, but he seemed charmingly indifferent to this loss. I gathered from his conversation that he has always been a man of fortune, and independent of literary earnings, although, as is usually the case when the writer does not need them, these have been unusually large. He has never known failure and scored an instantaneous success with his first novel, which he wrote while a student at the university. But on the other hand he has had great, the greatest, misfortunes in his family life through sickness. The ill health of his daughter used to take him every winter to Corfu—now, alas! these journeys are no longer called for. He told me about his way of working a curious thing—namely, that he can only write to his satisfaction when using scarlet ink. As his pages flow with blood, this is perhaps appropriate.

Violet ink, however, seems to be the favourite pigment with the most successful writers. I do not think, for instance, that Pierre Louÿs could use any other. It was also the ink used in his polemical compositions by the unfortunate Bernard Lazare, the valorous journalist who set himself the difficult task of rescuing Captain Dreyfus from the Devil's Island, and for years single-handed in the fight, with every force opposed to him, did eventually succeed in the

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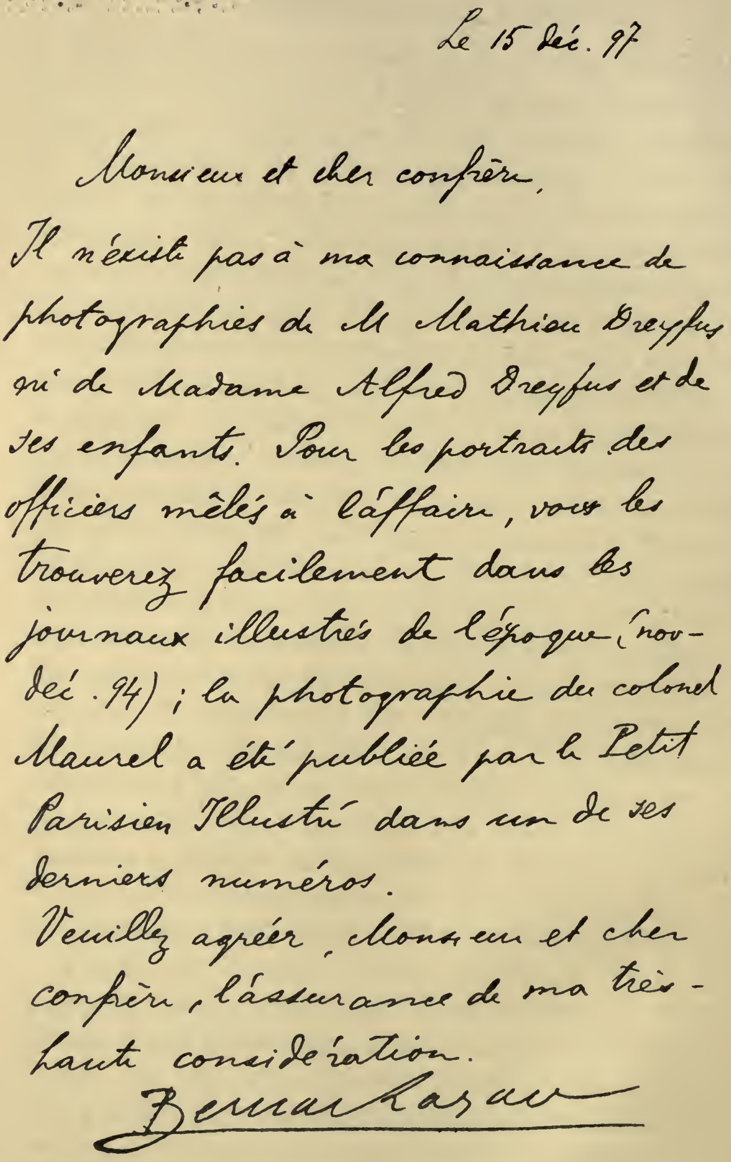

Le 15 Déc. 97

Monsieur et cher confrère,

Il n'existe pas à ma connaissance de photographies de M Mathieu Dreyfus ni de Madame Alfred Dreyfus et de ses enfants. Pour les portraits des officiers mêlés à l'affaire, vous les trouverez facilement dans les journaux illustrés de l'époque (nov-déc. 94); la photographie du colonel Maurel a été publiée par le Petit Parisien Illustré dans un de ses derniers numéros.

Veuillez agréer, Monsieur et cher confrère, l'assurance de ma très-haute considération.

Bernard Lazare

FACSIMILE OF LETTER TO THE AUTHOR FROM THE LATE BERNARD LAZARE, WHO PROCLAIMED THE INNOCENCE OF CAPTAIN DREYFUS FROM THE FIRST, AND FOR YEARS FOUGHT SINGLE-HANDED FOR HIS RELEASE.

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most complete and triumphant manner. But having been in the stress and toil he did not live to share in the honour and glory of victory, and died exhausted and disheartened, while others were enjoying in popular acclaim what should have been his. I find among my papers a letter from this brave and talented man, and as a graphological curiosity I give it in these pages. It was written to me at a time when Dreyfus was still a prisoner and I had been sent over to Paris to write—for a big American magazine—a full account of the tragic story of Captain Dreyfus as far as it had then gone.

Apropos of Captain Dreyfus, the journalist who secured the biggest "scoop" in connection with this affair was a fellow-passenger of ours on board the *Heliopolis*. This was Monsieur Jules Huret, who was travelling to Egypt with his wife on a pleasure trip. I was amused to watch his attitude towards the Nationalist Academician, Maurice Barrés, who was also on board, and to listen to his emphatic, "*Ah! fichtre non!*" when I remarked to him, apropos of the Nationalists, that he, Huret, was not in the same boat with them, although circumstances had on that occasion made him so. He seemed to indicate it as his opinion that the Nationalists were a common danger to France.

Jules Huret is quite one of the most remarkable men amongst contemporary French writers. He is *facile princeps* of modern French journalists, and his articles republished in book form have the literary polish and grace of style which one does not usually associate with journalism. Huret is a busy, a successful and, I should say, a very happy man. And the main reason why he is happy is, I believe, because he is blessed with an excellent wife. She seems the ideal helpmeet for the *homme de lettres*. She is a domestic woman, a *ménagère*, who looks after her husband's comforts. She has—and it is well-justified—the most extraordinary faith in him. A quiet, unassuming little woman, not a *mondaine*, but crammed full of common-sense and kindliness, she contrasted in my eyes very favourably with some of the other *Parisiennes*, wives of men of letters whom I have met. I think so well of her that I want to be allowed to give, in her own words, an account of Huret's literary career—the career of one of the most successful living journalists. Having the intention for the purpose of this book, which would not be a full account of my French friends, if it did not contain a description of Huret's work, I wrote and asked her to tell me all about her husband. She replied to me from Berlin where Huret was at that time engaged in one of his interesting *enquêtes* on German men and matters which have created such a big sensation on both banks of the Rhine.

"Jules Huret," she wrote me, "published his first articles in the *Echo de Paris*. It was here he inaugurated his system of inquiries, so eminently successful afterwards. His first inquiry was into the state of French literature of the day. He published a series of conversations with the different chiefs of the various literary schools, the symbolists, the decadents, the naturalists, etc., revealing their secret rivalries, the competition, and the often petty jealousy which reign in this world of artists, writers and poets. The articles were published in book form under the title 'Inquiry into the Literary Evolution.' Huret then joined the *Figaro*—that was in 1892—

and undertook a huge 'Inquiry into the Social Question,' which involved extensive travels all over Europe, interviewing the leaders of the different parties and the different classes: Rothschild and General Booth, the Marquis de la Rochefoucauld and the socialist mayor of Roubaix, the strikers of Lodz and the peasants of Picardy. Appointed subsequently theatrical chronicler to the *Figaro* he published an illustrated biography of Sarah Bernhardt and a series of newspaper articles and interviews, which were issued in book form under the title 'All Eyes, all Ears.' Amongst other narratives in this book was an account of an expedition which he made in Morocco, all alone, on the accession of Abdul Aziz. Huret wanted to be present at the entry of the new Sultan into Fez and so—though it was at the hottest time of the year—rode from Tangiers to Fez, arriving there in time, and being the only European journalist who was present. This feat," remarks Madame Huret—and I hope she will not be angry with me for quoting her words, but I want to show her admiration for her husband—"was a pretty brave thing to do, and may, I think, be considered, a journalistic record.

"But there have been other records in Jules Huret's career. For example, his fruitless pursuit of the unfindable Arton all over Europe. He alone also, after the Rennes trial, accompanied Dreyfus after his release to his retreat in the South of France, and was able to publish the touching narrative of the first hours of the innocent man's liberty. Huret alone, also, was present at the opening of the famous safe of that famous female impostor, Madame Humbert. Active and ingenious, knowing how promptly to turn to account every new thing that happens, to-day he will give the psychology of an artist, to-morrow that of a statesman or emperor. He interviewed Stanley, Booker Washington, Prince von Buelow. He has interviewed princesses, kings, archduchesses, presidents of republics, etc., etc. I don't remember who it was who styled him 'The King of Interviewers.'"

I do hope that good Madame Huret will not be vexed with me for showing people what a fortunate man my friend is to have by his side always to help, cheer and comfort him, a wife who has such a high appreciation of his character and work.

She goes on to speak of two very important works on America which, on the same system of inquiry, were written by her husband. They were published in France by Fasquelle under the titles "From New York to New Orleans," and "From San Francisco to Canada," and attracted great attention in the States.

"Enlarging his domain," writes his wife, "he has for the past few years been publishing in the *Figaro* vast economical, political and social inquiries. He travels through America and brings back two books crammed with facts, with minute observations, with statistics and figures, but especially with the subtle remarks of a trained and sagacious psychologist. These books are written with an alert and lively pen, full of colour and of life, of descriptions and picturesque traits of local customs and character. He describes the formidable hell of the American factories, the charm of the Californian landscapes, the splendour of a carnival at New Orleans, the picturesque Chinese quarter in San Francisco. He studies the negro question at Tuskegee, and at Salt Lake City analyses the psychology of the Mormons."

For the last year Huret has been working in Germany. His first volume of his German inquiry was called "In Germany, the Rhine and Westphalia." His second volume was called "From Hamburg to the Marches of Poland," and the third volume, on which he is still engaged, will be a series of chapters on the great social and economical questions in modern Germany.

I remember that my attention was first called to Jules Huret's splendid work in the *Echo de Paris* by one of the most charming French statesmen I have ever known. This was Monsieur Spuller, who lived in an apartment near the Opera Comique, where I frequently used to visit him. He was very amiable to foreign correspondents and I remember how enthusiastically he spoke of the "great journalist" who was "revealing himself." Spuller had been a journalist himself and knew how to appreciate good work. At his house about the same time, I met Monsieur Couteaux, a great authority on railways and finance and one of the most important men in the republic. Couteaux was a friend of Spuller, and used to evince his friendship for the gourmet minister, for Spuller was a true gourmet, by cooking little dishes for their joint delectation. For Couteaux, besides being a famous economist, was an excellent *chef*. He was the creator of the famous *lièvre a la Royale*, which served at Spuller's table made him one of the most popular of hosts in Paris, and greatly enhanced his political fortunes. How could a deputy refuse his support to a ministerial candidate who gave such succulent dinners as Monsieur Spuller? Spuller's cook was a *cordon bleu* and her name was Madame Bon, and she once told me that the best dish she ever learned to make was this *lièvre a la Royale,* the cooking of which had been taught her by Monsieur Couteaux. Couteaux would not give his recipe away, but he said that it was a very important thing to get the right kind of hare. "That first hare that I cooked for Spuller," he said, "took me a week's shooting in Poitou to procure. It was a male, ruddy of hue, weighing between five and a half and six pounds, and killed with such care that it had not lost a drop of its blood. That was the ideal hare for the *lièvre a la Royale.*" He would not enter into full particulars, and beyond telling me that the hare, cut up into pieces, was first stewed in a bath of Burgundy in a special *daubière,* which he had to borrow from mine host of the neighbouring Taverne de Londres, that this first stewing lasted till four o'clock, the *daubière* having been put on the gas stove at one, that after this a specially prepared *coulis* was added and that the hare was then allowed to stew for another two hours and a half, the while he, Monsieur Couteaux, studied a long report on the financial situation of the six great railway companies of France, he gave no details of the "divers aromatics and vegetables" which formed part of the first "bath" in which the hare was stewed, nor the mysteries of the *coulis* used for the second operation. He informed me, however, that the hare was wrapped up in slices of bacon, and that, if he had not had Burgundy handy, he might with equal success have used claret. The dish was a great success. The whole quarter of the Opera Comique was astir, and every restaurant within 300 yards of Spuller's house received callers, who, smelling the fragrance in the air, wanted particularly to know what was being cooked, as they would like some.

Cooking is considered in France a pastime, an art, and as such an occupation which may be pursued by even the most important. We have all heard of Dumas *père's* prowess as a *chef*. But the grave Monsieur Couteaux, the political economist, turning a *coulis*, while he perused a railway-returns report! One can hardly fancy the same sort of thing in England—Lord Avebury, for instance, jugging a hare in Lloyd-George's back-kitchen.

Reading and cooking at the same time—this recalls to me an anecdote that was told me in Dublin, which struck me at the time as very funny, and which even now I cannot repeat without giggling.

It was about an old Trinity professor—I forget his name—a very learned, bookish man. He had asked a man to dinner at his house, an invitation highly appreciated as a great honour. On the night of the dinner the guest, attired in his finest array, gardenia and all, drove up to the professor's house. It was some time before his knocking and ringing were answered; at last the professor himself, looking dishevelled and grumpy, came to the door. He was holding a book in his hand and kept glancing back at its pages, as though he found it difficult to take his eyes off them. However, he ushered his guest into the study, and some desultory conversation ensued. At last the professor, who seemed to be getting grumpier and grumpier, remarked: "Was there anything particular you wished to see me about? You see . . . rather busy to-night."

"Why, my dear sir, you asked me to dinner."

"Oh, so I did! Sure, and I'm most sorry. My shocking memory! I had clean forgotten about it. But don't go, sit down. You shall dine with me all the same. Just you sit where you are, my boy, and I'll put that right in a minute." So the professor rushed out of the room, still clutching his book, while the guest resigned himself to the prospect of a pot-luck dinner.

A long time, a very long time passed, and the professor never returned. Not a sound was to be heard in the house. At last a nasty smell of escaping gas began to pervade the study. It soon grew so bad that the guest, fearing that an accident might happen, got up and began to look for the place where the escape came from. His nose led him down the kitchen stairs, and through the kitchen into the scullery. And here he discovered his host, still absorbed in his book, holding a mutton-chop at the end of a fork over the gas stove, with the gas fully turned on but not lighted.

CHAPTER IX

George Du Maurier and an Interviewer—W. H. Wilkins, Author and Journalist—A Contributor's Physiognomy—Jules Huret outdone—An Interview under Difficulties—Monsieur Bis, *Rentier*—The Legatee and the Officials—The Parc aux Chats—Cats and Men of Letters—Paul de Kock and Frontin—Baudelaire and Monsieur Brunetière—Posthumous Animosities—An Author's Pets and his Neighbours—A Peasant and his Trespassers—The Land of Dune and Pine—Capbreton Wine—The Messages of the Pumpkins—The Vegetarian in the Kitchen Garden—New Wine for Old Barrels—A Masterpiece for a Canvas

On board the *Heliopolis* I had one or two talks with Jules Huret on mutual experiences as interviewers, for I also—long ago. . . . I could not say that it pleased me much to remember these things, *meminisse non juvabat.* We had both met the man who "hates being interviewed," "cannot understand what business the public," "protests emphatically against the indiscretions of the press," and finally, when the disappointed scribe, crestfallen and *impransus,* is leaving the room seizes him by the coat-tails, forces him down into a seat and cries, "Well, what is it that you want to know?"

I related how once an American magazine editor had arranged with George Du Maurier for me to call on him and take notes for an article in the form of an interview, on his literary career. "Trilby" had recently appeared in London, was being much talked about; curiosity had been aroused in America and George Du Maurier was an actuality. One morning in the Authors' Club I received a letter in a handwriting unknown to me. It came from Hampstead, and was written by one of the ladies of the Du Maurier family. It stated that M. Du Maurier had been asked to give me an interview and that he would be very glad to receive me for that purpose if I would call on him. This was the first intimation that I had received of the negotiations between the novelist and the editor. I took the matter as in the ordinary course of business, made an appointment, and some days later called at the house in Hampstead. Du Maurier received me very amiably and gave me very full particulars about his life and work. I was gratified by his reception of me and pleased with the interesting matter which had been supplied, while the pathos of this tardy triumph, after a lifetime of struggle, and more particularly of the terrible menace of impending blindness which had hung over the man's life and cast a perpetual shadow of gloom over the mind of one who was by trade and necessity a humorist, appealed very strongly to my sympathies.

Under the circumstances I was able to produce an article on George Du Maurier which, on its publication in America, produced a very considerable effect on the minds of the public, and did certainly contribute very largely to the enormous success of "Trilby." A year later, in the Authors' Club, I heard from W. H. Wilkins that he had been talking with Du Maurier some time previously, and that this article had been referred to. "Yes," said Du Maurier—this is what Wilkins told me—"that interviewer man came to my house and wanted to interview me. But I sent out to say

'Sorry. Busy. Must go away.' The next day the same chap turned up again, ringing and knocking. Again I sent him away. Then he came a third time, and really, you know, his persistence touched me and I let him in." That was Monsieur Du Maurier's account of my visit to his house. I presumed that his great success had turned his head.

Apropos of Wilkins, Fate was no kinder to him as an author than she was towards George Du Maurier. Both of them had fought long fights, success was at last attained, and then they were cut off before they had had time to enjoy their hard-won triumphs. Wilkins died just when his book on Mrs Fitzherbert was becoming a great commercial success. It will be remembered that it was the book of that season, and that, in spite of the disturbing influence of the election on the bookselling trade, it rapidly ran into a large number of editions. I remember that just at that time Mrs Earle, the authoress of "Potpourri from a Surrey Garden," wrote me saying that for the sale of books those months were quite as bad as "that bad winter during the war." Wilkins' success was therefore all the more fortunate, and in the same ratio it was all the more unfortunate that he should not have lived to enjoy it. He had worked very hard, but had never got beyond what the French call *un succès d'estime*, and though he had produced many books of merit equal to that of the Fitzherbert book, notably his "Queen of Tears," none of these, I think, did much more than pay its expenses. Wilkins was a tall, fine man, Britishly cynical, but agreeable. Besides bookwork he had achieved some success in journalism. For many years he edited *The Lady's Realm*, and he was also the literary adviser and practical manager of Mrs Woodhull Martin's extraordinary publication *The Humanitarian.* To this publication I also used to contribute—it was there that the famous Ibsen interview appeared—but my connection with it ceased after a visit I paid by request to the lady-proprietor's house in London. On being shown into the drawing-room, Mrs Woodhull Martin informed me that she wished to have a good look at my face, so as to be able to judge the sort of man I was. She accordingly bade me seat myself in a chair in the centre of the room, and then began walking slowly round the apartment, scrutinising my countenance from different points of view, now creeping towards me and peering up into my face, now receding to remote corners and gazing at me, while shading her eyes with her hand. The difficulty was to restrain myself from laughing, the whole *séance* was much more embarrassing than a sitting to a photographer. I presumed that the inspection of my physiognomy was not satisfactory, for I did not receive any further commissions from the good woman.

Wilkins was eminently a "society man," and on intimate terms, one understood, with peeresses. When he was editing *The Lady's Realm* he used to say that ladies of the *beau monde* literally bombarded him with manuscripts. "And though they are often the greatest rubbish," he remarked, "I am glad to get them and put them in, because the British public dearly loves to read anything written by a person of title." He also said that the countesses and duchesses who contributed were more eager and greedy about their cheques than the neediest Fleet Street hack.

"The King of Interviewers"—Monsieur Jules Huret—was bound to admit that I had done one thing at least in that branch of journalistic activity which he had not. He had interviewed kings and emperors, and so had I, but he had never handled a subject such as was dealt with by me in 1892. I always remember that interview, with one who was the richest of his kind.

In the interviewing business one often has great difficulties: skirmishing in doorways, long lingerings in dull antechambers and draughty passages, encounters with languid lackeys and supercilious *maîtres d'hôtel* and all the rest of it. I cannot recollect however having ever undergone more promenading from pillar to post, more tedium of waiting, nor to have been obliged to exercise more diplomacy than to get into the presence of this "subject."

It was all the more annoying to be rebuffed in my endeavours because I knew in advance that even when at last I should stand face to face with him, he would have nothing to say to me, absolutely nothing. That is a common enough experience, to be sure, with those who go a-interviewing to find that the great of the world have little or nothing to say, are indeed for the most part inarticulate, save for a "yea" or "nay," and strange rumblings in their throats, but at least one always hopes for the best. In this case however I knew from the start that, interview I never so wisely, it would all be language thrown away, that he would not talk, that he would be even more reserved than a Cabinet Minister who has to keep up the appearance of keen discretion. At the same time I had the comforting assurance that, although one of the wealthiest of his contemporaries, he would very probably not be proud, that, unlike too many people whom one meets, a sudden accession to fortune would not have turned his head, that in spite of the immense difference between himself, the capitalist, and me, poor proletarian of the pen, he would receive me amiably, even affectionately, and that even if he did spit upon my beard it would not be with scorn. I may say that to a certain extent my expectations were realised. He did eventually receive me as one who mounts the steep staircases of the great would ever like to be.

His name was Monsieur Bis, and at that time—until weighty issues had been decided—he was residing in an unfurnished flat at No. 54 Rue de Fondary, a street in the heart of Grenelle, in one of the remotest corners of Paris. It was the daughter of the *concierge* of this house who escorted me into the presence, and who unlocked certain doors of that third-floor flat, for Monsieur Bis was carefully guarded, which was natural, seeing what interests he represented.

He received me in the back-kitchen, and was occupied as I entered in pacing to and fro with a preoccupied air. Maybe I had interrupted him in the midst of a weighty consideration as to the best investments in the market. Patriotism would suggest Russian bonds, family ties some enterprise in Persia, but doubtless the French *Rentes* would be safest after all.

"Here is a gentleman come to see you, monsieur," said, by manner of introduction, the porter's lass. He, however, still walking to and fro paused only now and then to rub himself against the brickwork of the kitchen range. An embarrassing silence ensued. It was evident that he would say nothing and, though apparently he had no objection to my presence, his indifference discountenanced me. I profited by the respite—after mumbled congratulations on his good fortune—rapidly to survey the presence chamber. A very sweet simplicity, the sight of which did much to calm certain uncontrollable jealousies with which I eyed one whom never the terrible anxieties of life should vex, who, with his fixed income safely invested by impeccable trustees, had only to let himself float calmly down the stream of life, safe from the tides and currents by which you and I are so sadly buffeted. A plain repast, a dish of meat and some milk, was set out on the range, the floor was strewn with rushes as in Saxon days. Ah ! if all *rentiers* would live like this, what could the anarchists like Monsieur Anatole France have to say ?

Monsieur Bis, then, having no observations to offer, and apparently preferring his promenade, his reflections and the rubbing of his back to any intercourse with me, I was forced to address myself to the lady who had escorted me into his presence. Allow me however to disclaim on his behalf any rudeness towards his visitor. If he said nothing, it was because, under the circumstances, he could say nothing. His manners were perfect, and I particularly noticed his very graceful method of arching his back: indeed he showed himself a past master in deportment and might have been envied by Lord Chamberlains, Gold Sticks in Waiting, Masters of Ceremonies, and the whole of Turveydropdom.

"Can you tell me his age?"

"No, he has only been in the house eighteen months—that is to say, since Madame Dubrai came to live here."

"She was very fond of him, I suppose?"

"Beyond everything in the world. I never saw a more devoted mistress."

I feel myself here treading upon dangerous ground, and accordingly make haste to explain that Monsieur Bis, the subject of my interview, was a fine tom-cat, and that Madame Dubrai, then recently deceased, had been his owner. Bis was a very handsome animal: sleek, well-fed, as befitted a *rentier*, with fluffy fur of immaculate whiteness. He had a tender expression in his large grey eyes. Bis was an heir. When Madame Dubrai died, and her will was read, it was found that she had bequeathed a sum of 9000 francs to the Caisse des Ecoles of the Third Arrondissement, subject to two conditions. The first of these was that the municipality should provide that her tomb should always be kept in good repair, and the second was that her beloved tom-cat, Monsieur Bis, should be boarded and lodged for the rest of his natural life. A sum of eight pounds per annum was appointed by the testatrix to be paid to his trustees, who in return were to provide him with certain stipulated comforts. These were elaborately detailed, for, as the good

Madame Dubrai remarked while testating, "Bis has all his life been accustomed to his little luxuries."

The conditions under which he was to be boarded out were that the very first thing in the morning, he was to be served with a cup of milk in a saucer of Sèvres china, to which he had always been accustomed. At midday he was to have a square meal of liver or bullock's heart, suitably prepared, or else fish, but in case of fish being served all the bones were to be carefully removed. An occasional sardine might be given to vary the menu. In the evening another square meal of similar quality was to be served. He was to sleep always in a basket warmly lined with flannel. On Sundays he was to be combed and to have a bow of blue ribbon tied round his neck.

"Madame Dubrai was very fond of animals, you say? Had she any other pets?"

"No, only a bird, a canary."

"Is it also a legatee?"

There was no answer. I repeated my question, and lowering my voice added: "Perhaps it is dead?" The silence was awkward. Then I saw the mistake which I had committed. Monsieur Bis, however, did not seem to mind. Perhaps he had not heard: perhaps his thoughts were still taken up with that question about the three per cents. Evidently long since he had disposed of the canary bird's claim to any interest in the legacy.

"I suppose it is you who will undertake the conditions of the legacy?" I asked.

"We are keeping him," answered the girl, "pending the decision of the municipal council. It is rather a responsibility, and, as you see, we keep him locked up. We should be glad to keep him on, as we are so fond of him, and he is such a pet and so caressing."

"Rich people are always so nice," I said. The cat *looked* it. I felt sure that if he could have spoken he would have said it. He looked a great many things. Amongst others that I was not to imagine that it is the *summum bonum* of life to have a fixed income, that property had its cares as well as its joys, that one has to pay for being great, as witness his own case. By the way, how much more expression there is in a white than in a black cat's face. A white cat is infinitely more mysterious and sinister in certain aspects, and shows itself far more complex and subtle than its black brother.

What had especially aroused my curiosity in connection with this legacy to a cat was the manner in which the municipal official would consider the matter. In Paris there is as much of that commodity called red tape as in any other city in the world.

"You see," said a representative of the municipality, whom I consulted on the subject, "9000 francs will only produce an income of 300 francs. After deducting the 200 francs a year for the care of the cat, and paying for the upkeep of the lady's tomb, there will be little or nothing for the Caisse des Ecoles. It is true that the cat will not live for ever. We are informed by specialists in these matters that the average duration of feline life is twelve years, so that eventually we should step into possession of the legacy. I cannot tell whether we shall be allowed to accept it or not. We shall not know until a full report on the matter, which will be addressed to the Prefect of the Seine, has been considered. Our architect will have to inspect Madame Dubrai's tomb and estimate the cost of keeping it in repair, and a veterinary surgeon will be delegated to examine this Monsieur Bis and to calculate his chances of longevity. The wretched brute might live a long time. Or some tricks might be played upon us by the trustees. We should have to take strong precautions against a phenomenal life. We should have him photographed, and possibly marked, because it would not be very difficult to substitute another white cat with grey eyes, after Monsieur Bis's decease. That vermin is all alike. We could not tolerate a Monsieur Bis *á perpetuité*. The mayor would grumble to see the poor children of his district kept out of their inheritance whilst this Monsieur Bis or his successor was gorging himself on sardines and cream."

As I left the Rue Fondary house I asked the girl, "I suppose people in the quartier are much interested in his story?"

"Yes," she said. "Everybody keeps asking after his health. I suppose a good many people would like to be appointed his trustees. One does not find 200 francs a year in a mule's hoof."

I remember that as I returned homeward that night down the Boulevard Saint-Michel I looked into the gardens of the Cluny Museum. There is here a corner, where nightly all the vagabond cats of the Luxembourg quarter congregate, for charitable souls—mainly poor old women—bring scraps of food for them. The Parc aux Chats, as it is called in the quarter, was filled that night with a motley crew, as I looked through the railings. Phosphorescent eyes gleamed from every bush, and here and there a gaunt form passed mewing athwart the rays of the gas lamps. What a sorry, draggled, famished, unrestful, haggard crew it was! For these no *rentes*, no assured saucers of fine Sèvres porcelain, no flannel baskets, no ribbon bows on Sundays—only the tiles, and the gutter, the dogs, the urchins, rain and cold and hunger. "Bohemian cats, my brothers," I exclaimed, as I pressed my head against the iron bars, "when I look upon your distress, I pity you. And yet, and yet, when I think of those locked doors, whereas you have the wide world's range, and again of all the jealousies and expectations that lurk around the sleek and comfortable gentleman whom I have just seen, I take heart of courage and would like in congratulation to stroke your several backs. *N'est-ce-pas*, pariah pussies, my brothers, there is not one of us who would exchange our fretful freedom for the shackled leisures of Monsieur Bis, the *rentier* cat?"

In a subsequent reference to Saint Germain-en-Laye I shall have a word to say about some annuitant cats and how they fared at the hands of their trustee, being less carefully protected than was Monsieur Bis, who when I was last in Paris was still living, long after the actuary's estimate of his chances of longevity had expired.

I had been very fond of cats, so that the story of

Monsieur Bis and his "héritage" had specially appealed to me.

There is, I think, a time in the life of every man who works with his brain and taxes his nerve-force when, however fond he may be of dogs, he grows to prefer the hourly companionship of cats. The cat is so reposeful, so quiet about the room. It seems to understand nerves, to share in one's detestation of all that shocks, and I often think that the main reason for the cat's enmity towards dogs, and its certain contempt of the canine species, is that, with their exuberance and noise and restlessness, they mar his calm.

Paul de Kock, amongst other French writers, was an enthusiastic admirer of cats. He said of them that they were as capable of affection as dogs, and superior to them in gaiety, intelligence and pretty ways. "I have had cats," he writes, "which I would not have given for their weight in gold, notably one, who was called Frontin and who lived from 1830 till 1841. Frontin was not a cat. He was a poodle in good nature, a camel in sobriety and a monkey in intelligence. He used to follow me during the summer when I went for my walk in the wood of Romainville; in the winter he never left my workroom. Curled up on a cushion near my writing-table he used to sleep, or pretend to sleep, as long as I was working, but whenever I got up he used to rise also, and hunching his back, with his golden eyes fixed upon me, seemed to say: "Now we can have a chat, can't we?" And indeed we used to have a chat. I would speak to him while stroking his back and he would answer me. He had a different mew for different things, to ask me for food, for drink, for leaving the room, for permission to jump up on my knees, or to lick my hand, to come and wish me good-morning on awaking in bed, or good-night when I was going to sleep."

Baudelaire, the poet, was another writer who delighted in the society of cats, and in his "Fleurs du Mal," that volume of beautiful poisons, references to this will be found. Baudelaire, though he has now been dead more years than one likes to think of, is still one of the most discussed writers in France. The French public cannot agree either as to the value of his work or as to the poor man's private character while he lived. Some years ago a committee was formed for the purpose of erecting a statue to his memory. It then transpired with what abhorrence Baudelaire and all his works were regarded by many prominent Frenchmen. The committee included amongst its members most of the best-known poets and litterateurs of France. Our Swinburne was also a member. The president was that most "proper" of poets, Leconte de Lisle. Rodin was commissioned to execute the statue, which was to be placed above the poet's grave in the Montmartre Cemetery. After this had been announced, no less a man than Ferdinand Brunetière, in no less an organ than the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, published a most violent attack on Baudelaire. The article was remarkable for little but the venom of the attack: nothing fresh in the way of criticism was put forward, only the old diatribes by Sainte-Beuve, Scherer, and the many others who during the poet's lifetime had scourged him mercilessly.

Brunetière's article was vigorously taken up by the poet's many surviving friends, notably by Monsieur Albert Delpit, the novelist, who attacked Brunetière with such vigour and ferocity that it showed how greatly Baudelaire's friends had resented the attack on the dead master. Delpit stated that he had been the critic's personal friend for ten years but could be so no more. One was interested to see how animosities and such admiration could so long survive a man. That Baudelaire was a master of style I suppose nobody could deny. I remember a conversation I once had with Léon Cladel, the author of the famous "Jacques Patient," of "Les-Va-Nu-pieds," and many other books which were and are the delight of the connoisseurs. He told me all that he owed in craftsmanship of style and grace of diction, in which Léon Cladel excelled, to Baudelaire, who, by the way, did him the honour of writing a preface to one of his first books.

Cladel by the way was as fond of animals in general, and of dogs in particular, as Daudet detested them. He used to tell me of Baudelaire's fondness for cats, while professing himself a preference for dogs.

Amongst the best friends I ever had in France were a number of cats who, with an old Breton servant, shared my solitude in a little cottage in Normandy where for some years I led the life of a literary recluse, tired to death as I was of the turmoil of Paris and the frequentation of men and women. There were eleven of them, I remember, and the great event of the day was when I fed them. We used to get *mou* from the butcher for their meal, and when they heard me snapping the scissors in my backyard, preparatory to cutting up their meat, they would come to me from all parts of the surrounding fields and gardens. But, alas! my neighbours did not sympathise with my tastes, and as the months went by fewer and fewer grew the number who responded to my call. Your French peasant has a horror of cats, which he looks upon as the natural enemies of the *cultivateur*. And I suppose that cats do much damage, in small garden-plots, but still, to poison the pets of a lonely man! Well, the French peasant is capable of things worse than that, or Zola has not described him fairly.

I remember a peasant in the south of France, in a village in the Landes department, which is not very far from the place where Edmund Rostand had taken refuge, whose only delight in life was to shoot any strays that trespassed in his little garden.

I had gone to take rooms in his house, and just as I was opening the gate I saw a puff of white smoke break out from behind the door ajar. A loud explosion followed and a speckled hen, which had been scratching in the sandy soil near the palisades, flew up into the air in a cloud of dust and feathers, and then fell down again, a quivering and bleeding mass. At the same moment a short, thick-set man of about sixty years of age appeared in the doorway, holding a gun in his hand and chuckling audibly.

"It's Peter's speckled hen," he cried, turning his head and speaking over his shoulder to somebody within the house. "I have been waiting a long time for her. She has lost nothing by waiting either." This man, I discovered, used to spend most of his time in ambush behind the door waiting for trespassers.

"I don't shoot for pleasure," he explained to me one day, when I asked him why he did not rather—since he seemed fond of sport—go into the forest, and shoot rabbits or wild boar. "It is to annoy my neighbours, a low lot. Besides, there is the justice of the thing. Each man to his house and garden. I don't cultivate my garden as a run for cats and poultry whom I have not the pleasure of knowing." Just then a mongrel dog came slinking in through the gate. "Hush!" cried the man, "here comes old Mother Apollonie's dog. Let us prepare to give him a hearty welcome."

I daresay that, after all, my neighbours in the Norman village were prompted by no nobler motives. An Englishman living in their midst would not inspire them with much sympathy. Perhaps since the *entente cordiale* . . .

In the Landes, where I spent several months one year, a land of dunes and pine forests, where men and women still walk about on stilts over the marshy fens, there have survived in the *patois* many English words, which date from the days when the Landes formed part of the Duchy of Aquitaine. I used to be spoken of as "le Frenchman," and discovered that anybody who was not of the district was called a "Frenchman." The *patois* word for geese was geese, and I daresay mine and I were also so designated occasionally.

The sandy soil of the gardens is wonderfully fertile. Anything will grow in it. On the seashore, close down to the water, one sees vineyards the grapes of which furnish a very delicate and delicious wine. It is said of this *vin de Capbreton* that it is the most treacherous fluid that was ever got from winepress. "You drink and drink and feel nothing the matter with you," was told me, "until you try to rise from the table and then you find that you have lost your legs." It is a fertile and luxurious land, a spot for epicures. Here is the home of the ortolan: the fruits are fine beyond compare. And living is very cheap. I was able to rent for twenty-four pounds a year a fully furnished house, surrounded with a big garden. Round the house was a pergola of delicious grapes —a Bacchic cloister. In the garden were many vegetables, including a huge kind of vegetable marrow, called *gourde* there. One day in the summer I saw some people looking over my palisades, apparently admiring my *gourdes*, which were very fine indeed, but of which I had never taken any notice since they had been planted. I was pleased that my vegetable products should be admired, but I could not understand why the people should be laughing so much. Possibly, it occurred to me, some comparison had been instituted in their minds between myself and these *gourdes*, because *gourde* is slang French for duffer, blockhead, fool. However later on I found out what was exciting the hilarity of the passers-by. On each huge marrow stood forth in letters nearly six inches long some very unflattering reference to myself and domestic relations: THE ENGLISHMAN IS AN ASS, and worse things than that. I then discovered that it is the amiable custom of the youth in those parts to come early in the year by night, when the marrows are quite small, and with a needle to prick out on the rind of these cucurbitaceæ some sentence, which, invisible almost at the time, becomes as the plant grows more and more legible, until at the high season of its fruition the message conveyed may be read over one's garden wall by all who run. It is not always insult to the householder which is thus put on record. Sometimes a lovesick swain will choose this method of declaring his love for some female inmate of the house. So in my case. One of the pumpkins bore in huge script the announcement that the pimply post-boy of the village diligence was dying of love for a pretty Basque housemaid who was in my service.

It occurred to me one day while I was walking about in this pleasant and fruitful garden of mine, in the company of a French friend of mine, who was a food-reformer, that for a stroll in the midst of vegetation a man who is a professed vegetarian is not the most desirable companion. The pleasure he takes in his surroundings lacks your own disinterestedness. Your placid enjoyment in the beauties of the plants and vegetables is not, and cannot be, the only emotion which stirs his breast. The vegetarian in a garden, and particularly in a kitchen garden, feels and looks very much like a meat eater at a cattle show. The gleam in his eye is not without concupiscence. His sidelong glances at the pleasant things in your parterres do not suggest a simple love of the beauties of nature. The suspicion forces itself upon you that the man is selecting the joint—or what in his dietary shall be its equivalent—for his Sunday dinner.

I do not remember ever having lived in a land where wine was so plentiful as it was there. For sixteen shillings one could always buy a cask of white *pique-poult*—excellent drinking for the table. One used to send the maid to the cellar with a big pitcher of green glazed earthenware, in which it sparkled like gold.

And there were times when it was even cheaper than sixteen shillings for the butt of 400 quarts. The year before I went down there, barrels being very scarce in the district, you could always barter "wood" for wine. That is to say, if a man went to a vine-grower with two empty barrels, the *vigneron* would fill one of them for him, in exchange for the other. This reminded me, when I heard of it, of an unfortunate painter who painted masterpieces, but who was so very poor that often he could not afford to buy a canvas on which to work. Sometimes such was the distress of this man—this great man, who used to walk about the fields in the blue smock and yellow clogs of the French peasant—that he would wipe out some finished picture so as to have a fresh surface on which to paint again. At other times he would go round the village to some more prosperous artist and say to him: "If you have two canvases to spare and will give me one for my own use, I will paint you as good a picture as I can on the other, and it shall belong to you."

The village where these things took place was Barbizon.

The name of the artist was Jean François Millet.

CHAPTER X

A Great Sale—Millet's "Angelus"—Tout-Paris and some Others—Meissonier and the "Slump"—Some Prices obtained—"No. 63"—The Beginning of the Fight—How I bought "The Angelus"—Incidents—Dollars and Francs—A *Fausse Sortie*—The Second Auction—The Frenchmen's Premature Triumph—An incredulous Cabman—Old Masters—Edison's Opinion of Same—The Thatched Cottage at Barbizon—A Specialist in Thatched Roofs—Monsieur Fallières and his Salary—"Me for the Mazuma!"—A Peasant's Comment

I WELL remember that sweltering July day when Millet's "L'Angelus" was sold by public auction at the Galérie Sedelmeyer, during the Sécrétan sale. Sécrétan and other financiers had endeavoured to corner copper. The corner had "bust"—as Frank Norris would have said: Sécrétan was ruined and his art collection came to the hammer.

It was in this way that I came to be possessed of that famous picture, which now at last rests in the gallery of Monsieur Chauchard, drygoodsman and principal proprietor of the Louvre stores.

At one o'clock already the long gallery in which the sale was to be held was filled with ticketholders, for nobody was under any condition allowed to enter the auction-room without a card. There were so many valuable things piled up in that room that any dishonest person might have picked up a fortune, in that crush, amidst that excitement. It would have been no difficult matter for me, for instance, on more than one occasion, to have slipped the very "L'Angelus" itself under my coat, had I not preferred to acquire it in the usual and more honest way.

Outside the gallery, in the hottest sun that I can remember in Paris, an interminable queue of amateurs, ticketholders for whom no room could be found, went down the steep slope of the Rue de la Rochefoucauld, and round the corner into the Rue St Lazare, waiting patiently for some chance to gain admittance.

Those of us who entered were accommodated on gilt wicker chairs. The carpets on the floor were very soft. One noticed masterpieces on all the walls. Close to me were Meissonier's "The Cuirassiers," and Corot's "The Morning" and "Biblis." A fine Troyon attracted much attention. Sécrétan paid 60,000 francs for it. An American dealer who was behind me remarked that the whilom Copper King might have paid "considerable" more money for a "pointer" on the state of the metal market. Troyon's picture represented a dog of that breed. The American enjoyed his joke and repeated it to each newcomer with tedious insistence.

Tout-Paris was there. I noticed Coquelin and Armand Houssaye seated between the two Stevens. Reinach was there, of course. There were many ladies; here and there the great collectors and dealers and dealers' agents from all parts of the world. The Americans were in great force, and we were informed that they were going to fight hard for the possession of Millet's "masterpiece."

I was sitting next to Colnaghi of the Haymarket, and near me was Moreau-Chaland, who announced his intention of offering up to £16,000 for "The Angelus."

"It is so hot," said a friend to him, "that you are certain to do silly things. You are going to buy a quantity of pretty pictures, now you know you are."

"I don't call that stupid," said Moreau-Chaland, "and as to the heat, just wait until the bidding begins. They say that the Louvre will have 'The Angelus' at any cost."

"Is Meissonier here?"

"No. It wouldn't do, because if his pictures were to sell badly, see how he would look. I hear by the way that he is far from delighted that this sale is taking place, for of course it will supply any reasonable demand for Meissoniers for a long time to come. There are twenty-four of his pictures, including what are considered his best, for sale to-day. Le slump, quoi? Le joyeux slump!"

There was a famous London dealer just in front of me, who was escorting a very pretty young woman, *chic au possible*. As I had read in the papers a few days previously that he had just got married, I concluded that this was madame, and in a letter which I sent to a journal to which I was then contributing I mentioned the presence of this dealer "with his pretty bride." Some days later I met the man in the street. "You nearly got me into a nice scrape," he said, "over the Sécrétan sale. That young lady was not my wife."

I remember the triumphal entry of Herr von Blowitz, superb in a grey hat, with the sweetest of white silk Lavallière ties imaginable. People parted for him to pass, and so he made his way down to a seat which had been specially reserved for him, on the left-hand side of the auctioneer's desk. Here he seated himself—a fresh and springtime presence—facing an awed crowd.

"Now there is nothing more to wait for," said a French journalist in my hearing. "Let the auction begin."

By the time the auctioneer and his posse entered every square inch almost of floor space in that stifling room was occupied. The heat was appalling.

The sale began without preface or prologue. Monsieur Chevalier climbed into his seat and produced his hammer. Behind him was a group in marble, a "Pious Æneas" holding aloft his father and household gods. The crier, who announced the lots as they were put up, was standing behind the Trojan, and could not be seen, and it really sounded as if Æneas, so careful of his own penates, was, in a cracked voice, dispersing the household gods of poor Monsieur Sécrétan.

The "dance"—as a French dealer styled it—was begun with a portrait of Poussin, by Ingrès. It had cost sixty pounds and fetched thirty-two. La Fontaine's portrait, by the same painter, valued at sixty, fetched four pounds above that sum. Coquelin bought the third lot, a drawing by Delacroix, the portrait of Regnier, the actor. It was valued at eighty pounds and Coquelin got it for forty.

The fourth drawing was a water-colour by Lami, "The Presentation of the Dauphin to the Spanish Ambassadors by Louis XIV." Here the excitement began. It was set going at 2000 francs and in half-a-minute reached 5000. Then there was a pause, and with great difficulty another bid of

100 francs was obtained before the hammer fell. Then came two more Lamis, "Le Rendezvous de Chasse" (4400 francs) and "Jour de Reception à Versailles" (3200 francs)

The next lot was a drawing by Meissonier, and a sigh of expectation went up. It was the charcoal drawing of a man, who was any man, and it was valued at eighty pounds. At this price nobody would even look at the man who was any man, and with difficulty thirty-six pounds was obtained. The portrait of another man, who was a certain Corneille, also by Meissonier, fetched four pounds more.

"The Gentleman curling his Moustaches" attracted very different attention. He was started at eighty pounds, and leapt by degrees of twenty pounds a time to £360, as fast as could be. From which point, by four-pound bids, he climbed to £404, and at this price he was knocked down. We understood that he would in future curl his moustaches on Fifth Avenue.

The "Gentilhomme Louis XIII.," the "Trompette à Cheval" and the "Spadassin" fetched about forty pounds the square inch, the better known "Chess Players" was knocked down at 22,500 francs.

"Now we are getting into long prices," remarked a neighbouring American.

On the Meissonier drawings follows "La Sérénade" by Leloir, which reached 16,200 francs.

Then from behind the pious Æneas rings out the name of Millet, and a kind of hush, similar to that which marked Monsieur de Blowitz's entry, falls on the sweltering room. But it is not *the*

Millet, but his "Paysan Faisant Boire Deux Vaches." It mounts to 26,000 francs. His "Bergère," sold by himself in Barbizon for a couple of louis, went up to £1000. On this follows Decamps' "Jésus Parmi les Docteurs," which fetches 28,000 francs.

The sale of oil-paintings was then commenced. The first put up was Fromentin's "Arab Children" (13,900 francs), followed by his "Arab Horsemen" (13,800 francs) and Géricault's "Lancier" (14,100 francs). "A rattling good bargain," said my American neighbour.

During the next few minutes the following pictures were sold at the prices marked:—Rousseau's "Le Chemin" (18,900 francs); Rousseau's "Hameau en Normandie" (22,900 francs); Diaz's "La Mare sous Bois" (37,500 francs); Diaz's "Etude de Femme" (15,000 francs); Daubigny's "Forest Rivulet" (1500 francs). A "Venus and Adonis" by Diaz realised 36,000 francs; his "Venus and Love" only fetched 17,800 francs. As a matter of fact this picture was knocked down at 16,100 francs, but a contestation arose and it was put up again, with the above result.

"C'est toujours ça de gagné," remarked a housewifely person in my hearing.

When the first Meissonier picture was announced, with the respect that lackeys give to ambassadors, animation marked itself on countenances sleepy till then. The painting was "Le Liseur en Costume Rose," which, started at 7000 francs, went up by bounds to 66,000 francs, at which price it was bought by Monsieur Sedelmeyer, in whose "gilt and splendid parlour" we were then gathered. The "Versailles Bowl Players" fetched 71,000 francs; the "Vin du Curé" 90,000. "The Painter and the Amateur" found an amateur at 42,000 francs; "Causerie" sold for 29,000 francs; the "Joueurs de Boules dans les Fosses d'Antibes" fetched 44,500 francs, while the "Joueurs de Boules a Antibes" was bought for 60,000. But the event of the day as far as Meissonier was concerned was the bidding for the famous "Les Cuirassiers" (1805), which began at £4000 and was knocked down at £7600 after a smart contest, during which hundreds of pounds were juggled with like earthen plates.

After the sale of the "Cuirassiers"—it was just on the stroke of five—particular animation and movement was noticed round the auctioneer's desk. Something was going to happen. A hush fell on the crowd. No more "Dieu que j'ai soif!" "Mon Dieu, qu'il fait chaud!" "Mais on étouffe ici, ma parole d'honneur!" rose querulously between those red-tapestried walls.

From behind the pious Æneas the passionless voice goes forth, but this time not without a quaver:

"We now put on sale No. 63, 'The Angelus' of Millet."

We see Blowitz holding up to his face a small frame into which he is peering with intentness. As he hands it back to one of the officials of the sale his face expresses genial approbation.

But few notice him. Everybody is eager and expectant. People who would not have advanced the poor peasant painter of Barbizon a single five-franc piece in his lifetime are loud in their admiration of the great master. The auctioneer himself is moved, as he well may be, for such things come but once in a man's lifetime. There is emotion in the voice with which he shouts out the first bids.

"One hundred thousand francs! One hundred and twenty-five thousand, one hundred and thirty, one hundred and fifty, one hundred and sixty, two hundred thousand francs! Two hundred and twenty, two hundred and fifty, sixty, seventy-five, eighty thousand francs! Two hundred and eighty thousand francs!"— a lull comes over all. It is as if the skirmishing having ceased, a slight pause had ensued, during which the real combatants prepare for the serious encounter.

It was amusing just then to look round and mark the nervous reverence with which the porters turn and turn the little picture, so that all may see it. "This is the article! Look at the article! These are the goods we are selling!" One notices a marked difference in the physiognomies of the Americans on the one hand and of the French on the other. There is real anxiety depicted on the face of every Frenchman present, distress at the thought that this picture might leave the country. Just the expression that one has imagined recently on the noble lineaments of the Duke of Norfolk, or of the Messrs Colnaghi, under similar circumstances. The Americans, on the other hand, to whom the whole thing was nothing more nor less than a business "proposition," looked phlegmatically assured of the omnipotence of their dollars.

"Does anyone want it at over two hundred and eighty thousand francs? We have a buyer at two hundred and eighty thousand francs! At two hundred and eighty thousand francs! Follow up, gentlemen, follow up!"

"Three hundred thousand," cries one with an American accent, and in the tones of a desperate man.

This opens the ball, and in rapid succession the following figures are hurled upon the stifling air, till one fancies he sees a perfect saraband of golden coins dancing overhead.

"Three hundred and fifty thousand!" "And one!" "And four!" "Three hundred and sixty thousand francs!"

The last was the offer of a little man in a bowler hat who did not look, at a first glance, as if the whole of his estate, real and personal, would, after all death duties had been paid, have realised two sovereigns.

The offer was for £14,400. Then there was a pause.

It was at that moment that I became the owner of Millet's "Angelus."

The big dealers on either side of me had assured me that the picture would not sell for a cent below £20,000. So that I was running no risk in what I did.

I threw out my hand and shouted: "Three hundred and seventy-five thousand francs!"

For the moment I was not only the proud possessor of the contested masterpiece, but enjoyed the full fruits of the ownership of wealth. Deferential glances were thrown at me. A demi-mondaine smiled sweetly, and moved a little closer.

For twenty seconds I, I—*moi qui vous parle*—did own and possess "The Angelus," by Millet. Sécrétan had owned it for a few years. The Chauchards may own it a hundred. My possession was not the less definite because it was so brief.

In the face of eternity such periods of time—differentiated though they may appear to us—as twenty seconds, three years, or one century dwindle into the infinite zero.

The splendour and the glory passed.

A voice which had an American accent, and which proceeded from somewhere behind the auctioneer's desk, shouts out: "Three hundred and eighty thousand!"

The little man in the round hat, curling his moustache: "Four hundred thousand francs."

The American: "Four hundred and one!"

It is between the little man and the voice behind the desk that for the next few seconds the duello is waged.

"Four hundred and one!" "Four hundred and two!" "And six!" "And ten!" "And twenty!"

The invisible one has conquered, for the little man in the round hat is dragged away by friends, possibly his *conseil de famille*—and exit quivering with—what feelings may they be.

And now the fight grows general. Voices are loud and harsh. Curled back lips display canine teeth. It is as though a monstrous golden calf had been set up in the red room, instead of that picture of sweet and simple piety.

"And twenty-three!" "And thirty-two!" "And forty-one!"

Here a pause ensues. Then the representative of the Louvre steps forward and says: "Four hundred and fifty-five thousand francs!"

At which all the Frenchmen present applaud.

But the Americans are not beaten yet, and presently one of them, who has torn open a cablegram, smiles and says: "And sixty thousand!"

"And one!"

"And five!"

The Frenchman cries: "Four hundred and seventy-five thousand!"

And so the fight proceeds and the echoes ring with thousands. At last the Louvre man, clearing his throat, calls out: "Half-a-Million!"

"And one," adds the American.

"And two," says the Frenchman.

The American pauses. The auctioneer, not without patriotism, raises his hammer, glances round and brings it down. "The Angelus" is saved for France! The enthusiasm of the French is great, and cries of "*Vive Millet!*" are raised. But the triumph might not be of long duration. A rush is made from all parts of the room to the auction desk, which the more excited of those who have been disappointed would escalade. Cries of "Foul Play!" are raised, fists are brandished, sticks are swung aloft. One might fancy oneself in the Pit at Chicago, or at a sitting of the Chamber of Deputies. After an indescribable tumult the announcement is at last made that the picture was knocked down too soon, and must be put up again. In less than ten seconds it is at 541,000 francs, the Americans bid higher, and the fight goes on with verbal savagery, until at last the Frenchman cries out "Five hundred and fifty-three thousand francs!"

"We have a buyer at five hundred and fifty-three thousand francs. Is there anyone who wants it at more?"

The auctioneer gives full time for any bidder to speak again. Silence. He raises his hammer and brings it down with a heavy rap, "*Adjugé.*"

Now, without contest, "The Angelus" is saved for France.

An indescribable scene of rejoicing ensues. Hats are flung into the air, cheers ring out, the women wave whatever they have to wave, and clapping hands add to the tumult. There was satisfaction to the French in having beaten the Americans on the field of the pile of gold, and perhaps greater satisfaction in knowing that the picture would now be the property of France for ever.

At least, so it was thought at that moment.

It appeared, however, that some little while afterwards a fresh protest was raised by the Americans and successfully enforced. How the picture was then secured by them, how it was sent round the U.S.A. to be gaped at as the One Hundred and Twenty Thousand Dollar Picture, are matters of common knowledge. As for myself, it was under the impression that the French had gained the day that I left the hall in the midst of the tumult.

I remember communicating the intelligence to my cabman.

"They have just sold a picture in there for 553,000 francs. It was painted by a man who died penniless!" I said.

"That I do not believe," said the cabman, as he gathered up his reins. "When a man has talents of that description, he never remains long without employment."

My *cocher's* comment set me on a new train of thought, and before I reached home I felt myself ashamed because in thinking about "The Angelus" and Millet I had allowed thoughts of lucre to enter my head. That had been Philistine of me, most Philistine. I should have rejoiced only in the fact that Millet had painted such a picture. I should have remembered that when he had painted it, although he could only sell it for a trifle, he knew that it was a great picture; he knew that it was a masterpiece; he knew that he had carved his name imperishably on the column of immortal renown. It is one of the attributes of genius to possess this consciousness of greatness. I often think of André Chenier bumping his forehead against the upright of the guillotine, while awaiting his turn to stretch himself under the knife, and saying, "And yet there were great things there." The "*E pur se muove*" of Galileo is another exemplification. I don't suppose Millet would have wanted to receive 600,000 francs for his picture. It would have raised doubts in his mind as to its worth. He would not have known what to do with that money. He would have thought with regret that, with so much money at his command, he must leave his thatched cottage, and the plains of Barbizon, the pleasant forest of Fontainebleau; that the days of quietude were over, and the simple life, and the freedom, and the exquisite solitude with the wife he loved. It was an insult to the artist to regret that he had not been made rich by his work.

All the same a little encouragement does help us wonderfully. One professes to despise popularity, yet for the want of it we perish, as some great Frenchman remarked. A little joy in life is a wonderful thing. I often take delight when I am walking abroad in towns and happen to see some poor little child ambling along, dirty, depressed, with nothing pleasing to look forward to, to press a coin into his hand, and then to watch. It never fails. For a moment or two he continues on his depressed gait, but inevitably the instant comes when I see him give a skip and run forward. The incident, the surprise, the pleasure have put life and joy and hope into him. It is so with artists also, a little encouragement gives the impetus without which in the end all hope dies. But between a little encouragement and the earning of a sum monstrous to the extent of being an insult, there is an immeasurable distance. It was Philistine of me to regret that it was Sécrétan and not Millet who had received the 600,000 francs.

I attended the sale next day, and was amused to find that many were loud that Tuesday morning who had been as mute as Fontainebleau carps during the fight on the previous day. These now declared that not for any consideration would they have allowed "The Angelus" to leave France. Everyone has met this class of person—the enthusiast *après la lettre.* One of them, however, a great banker, seemed to have gone beyond words, and had offered in the name of art to present the Millet syndicate with £19,000, so that the Louvre Gallery might enter without preliminaries into possession of the picture.

It was a real relief when Monsieur Chevalier and his acolytes mounted the auction desk. One could not help noticing that, like the temperature, public enthusiasm was cooler than on the previous day. In art, at least, room has been made for the young, and one is so modern to-day that towards the once revered old masters—these were the works which were now to be put on sale—a spirit of gentle tolerance has taken the place of prostrate admiration. They did well, according to their lights, but in these days, *soyons modernes*.

This sentiment, as those who have done me the honour to read my "Twenty Years in Paris" will remember, was emphatically voiced by Thomas Edison during a conversation he had with me about the Paris Exhibition.

"I like modern pictures," he said, "as much as I dislike antique stuff. I think nothing of the pictures at the Louvre. I have no use for the old things, they are wretched old things. Now the pictures in this exhibition are all as new and modern as they can be: they are good."

The second day of the Sécrétan sale was Old Masters Day. The spirit of the public was with the young. When a *jeune* could paint a picture which sold by auction for £23,000. . . . Well, you can gather the point of the argument.

Perhaps the pleasant gentleman who, when the sale had begun, and Thomas de Keyser's "Portrait of a Legal Gentleman" was put up, whispered "Lor' Maire," and raised a laugh, exceeded in zeal for modernity. It fetched 22,000 francs, while 21,000 were paid for his "Portrait of a Young Lady." A whole family "in an interior" by the same artist was purchased by Sedelmeyer for 23,000 francs.

The sale of another Dutch interior—namely, that by Pieter de Hooghe—was what whipped us, pillars of salt, from looking back into semblance of enthusiasm. There was a general stir, even amongst those into whose philosophy no Pieter de Hooghe, or anything of the sort, had ever entered, when the picture was announced. When they told us that it was valued at £6000 we thought it a crying shame so to underrate him. And there was none present who did not think that Durand-Ruel had made an excellent bargain when, after much thrust and parry with golden swords, he secured the picture for £11,040. It appeared that the Dutch interior was to go to adorn some American home, and I hoped it might be of Knickerbocker origin.

When they brought in Quintin Matsys' portrait of Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, my thoughts went back to my undergraduate days at New College, Oxford. I seemed to remember those eyes looking down upon me in Hall—eyes which appeared to say, "Well, you're a nice young fellow. But if you think you have any chance of following my very successful career, you make one of the biggest mistakes of your life." I had felt so snubbed as a lad by the supposed assumption of his superiority that I was glad almost to notice that Stephen Gardiner was not so much thought of nowadays, perhaps, as formerly. He had great difficulty in reaching the sum of £1200.

One was rather disappointed when the announcement was made that Nos. 164 to 168 by Teniers were to be sold together. It was obvious of course that the "Five Senses" could not be separated, but it would have been interesting to compare what "Sight," for instance, and "Smell" would separately have produced, and if "Hearing," *cæteris paribus*, would have fetched as much as "Touch." As it was, an American acquired "Five Senses" for £2410.

The Greuzes realised good prices. "La Prière" was sold for 17,600 francs, "Mademoiselle Philiberte Ledoux" for 10,900, and a "Portrait d'Artiste" for 4100 francs.

The Franz Hals pictures did well also. His "Dutch Family" went for £1200. His portrait of Peter van de Broecke d'Anvers, valued at £2400, was sold after a hard fight to the Messrs Agnew for £4420. It was the last bid of twenty pounds which secured the picture for the London dealers. The French Government had been anxious to purchase it, but had fixed a limit of £4400. Amongst old masters which were then disposed of were Metsu's "Intérieur Hollandais" (£2680); Van Dyke's portrait of Scaglia (£580), and his portrait of Anne Cavendish (£560). The Rembrandts sold as follows:—"The Man in Armour," £960; the "Portrait of a Man," £960, and the "Portrait of my Sister," £1180. A portrait of "Philip IV." by Velasquez fetched only £480. I wondered what Whistler might have to say.

Altogether the two days' sale realised a total of £219,742. As I said at the time, it seemed a deal of change for a little copper.

When we got to the saleroom on the third day we heard that that morning Monsieur Proust had paid over to Monsieur Chevalier the sum of £23,226, representing the purchase-money of "The Angelus" and the auctioneer's commission. It was then proposed to place it in the Exhibition of Retrospective Art at the Champ de Mars. One felt sorry that, in spite of all the regret expressed by everybody that a man who could paint such a picture should have died penniless, nobody suggested that something might yet be done for Madame Millet, the painter's widow, who was in very bad circumstances, and who only a short while previously had had the sorrow of seeing the thatched cottage at Barbizon, where she had shared Jean François's peasant life, and where "The Angelus" was painted, levelled to the ground for building purposes.

Apropos of thatched cottages, I was interested to learn from a painter whom I met in Normandy some years ago, that there is in the States a steady demand for pictures of such houses. The artist who told me this said that he had started on his artistic career with high ambitions. But high art had not paid, he had a wife and children to keep, and so he had come to paint thatched cottages, and nothing but thatched cottages. He had a standing commission from a dealer in New York for as many "thatched cottages" as he could turn out, and for each picture he received three and a half dollars. His weekly output, he said, varied from five to seven. He used to travel about Normandy, Brittany and other old-world districts of France and paint every cottage with a straw roof that he came across.

"There is no waiting for my money in this business," he said, "which is the only good thing about it. The agent of the New York firm brings me the money in hard cash every week and pays it down on the table."

I wonder if Monsieur Fallières, the French President, feels a similar satisfaction when the Treasury clerks bring him his salary. By some curious custom, dating no doubt from the days of the old *régime*, this also is paid him in actual, hard cash. On a certain day in every month two officials from the Ministère des Finances, accompanied by a clerk from the mint, bring him 100,000 francs in gold and notes, all brand-new. The occasion is always one of genial pleasantries.

"Voilà de la galette, Monsieur le President," says the chief official ("Here is money"). Then he adds: "We hope it will not bother you."

And then Monsieur Fallières lays a fat hand on the bags of gold and leather portfolio. "Me for the Mazuma!" he says, laughing, or some French equivalent of that popular New York phrase, which means: "I am the man for money."

The President's salary is not very large, but, such as it is, to many French citizens it appears a splendid income. I remember once hearing a French peasant exclaim: "Quelle cuite ce jour là" (What a "drunk" on that day), when he had been told that Monsieur Fallières touches 100,000 francs one day every month.

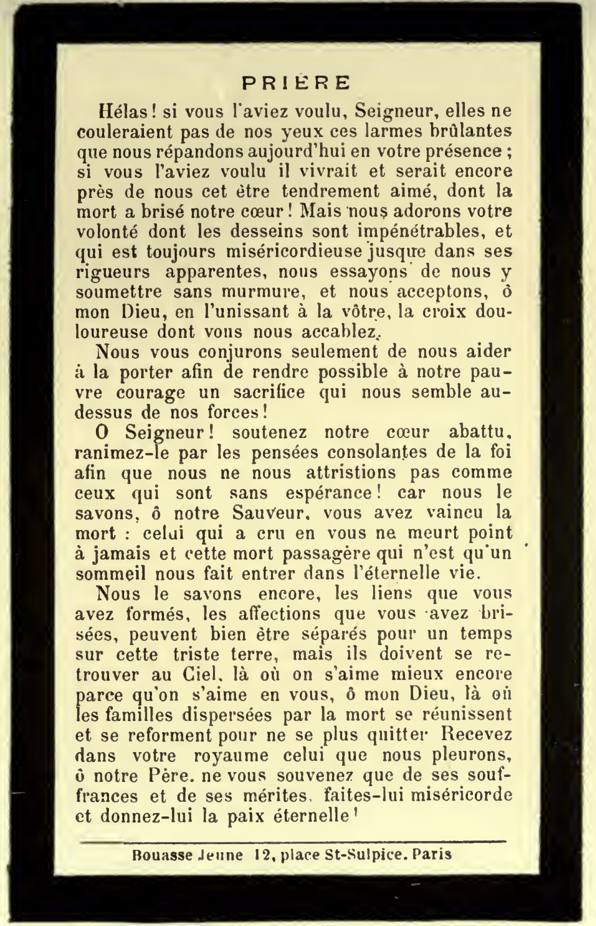
CHAPTER XI

Success and hard Work—Carnot at the Elysée—Napoleon's Vigils—Count Ismael de Lesseps—Still a Lieutenant—My Visit to the Panama Canal—Forty Thousand Lives for One—How de Lesseps is remembered—A Letter never to be written—How Madame de Lesseps died—Her last Words—De Lesseps' Indifference to Money—How shared by French Savants—Chevreul, Moissan, Marey—French Indifference to Outside Matters—"Qui ça, McKinley?"—What the Frenchman reads—On Serial Stories—How advertised—The Gangs of "Barkers"—English Authors and French Publishers—Stories of Evil Inns—Two Women and their Father—On the Calais Highroad—Monsieur Carter of *The Graphic*—The French Patriot's two Guns

EVEN if President Fallières does, in joke, on the occasions of the payment of his salary, describe himself as a man who is fond of Mazuma, or money, he will not be remembered in history as *un homme d'argent.* Men who go in for the making of money think of little else; a French President has a great many things to think of.

The only French President who really was "for the Mazuma" was Monsieur Grévy. Carnot was out of pocket over his tenure of the presidency, and so was Faure. Loubet, I think, made both ends meet. When Monsieur Fallières was elected the Nationalists declared that the Grévy system was once more to be inaugurated, and reminded one of the connection of the new President with the *Affaire du Panama.*

My own opinion was that Monsieur Fallières was not "out for graft"—to use an expressive Ameri-



PRIÈRE

Hélas! si vous l'aviez voulu, Seigneur, elles ne couleraient pas de nos yeux ces larmes brûlantes que nous répandons aujourd'hui en votre présence; si vous l'aviez voulu il vivrait et serait encore près de nous cet être tendrement aimé, dont la mort a brisé notre cœur! Mais nous adorons votre volonté dont les desseins sont impénétrables, et qui est toujours miséricordieuse jusque dans ses rigueurs apparentes, nous essayons de nous y soumettre sans murmure, et nous acceptons, ô mon Dieu, en l'unissant à la vôtre, la croix douloureuse dont vous nous accablez.

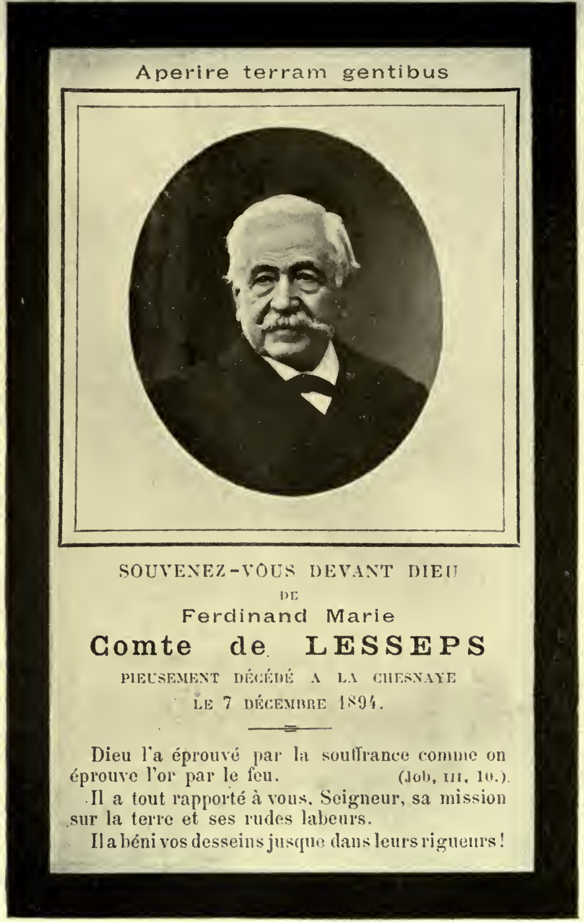
Nous vous conjurons seulement de nous aider à la porter afin de rendre possible à notre pauvre courage un sacrifice qui nous semble au-dessus de nos forces!

O Seigneur! soutenez notre cœur abattu, ranimez-le par les pensées consolantes de la foi afin que nous ne nous attristions pas comme ceux qui sont sans espérance! car nous le savons, ô notre Sauveur, vous avez vaincu la mort: celui qui a cru en vous ne meurt point à jamais et cette mort passagère qui n'est qu'un sommeil nous fait entrer dans l'éternelle vie.

Nous le savons encore, les liens que vous avez formés, les affections que vous avez brisées, peuvent bien être séparés pour un temps sur cette triste terre, mais ils doivent se retrouver au Ciel, là où on s'aime mieux encore parce qu'on s'aime en vous, ô mon Dieu, là où les familles dispersées par la mort se réunissent et se reforment pour ne se plus quitter Recevez dans votre royaume celui que nous pleurons, ô notre Père, ne vous souvenez que de ses souffrances et de ses mérites, faites-lui miséricorde et donnez-lui la paix éternelle!

Bouasse Jeune 12, place St-Sulpice. Paris

VERSO OF THE DE LFSSEPS MEMORIAL CARD



Aperire terram gentibus

SOUVENEZ-VOUS DEVANT DIEU
DE
Ferdinand Marie
Comte de LESSEPS
PIEUSEMENT DÉCÉDÉ A LA CHESNAYE
LE 7 DÉCEMBRE 1894.

Dieu l'a éprouvé par la souffrance comme on éprouve l'or par le feu. (Job, III, 10.)

Il a tout rapporté à vous, Seigneur, sa mission sur la terre et ses rudes labeurs.

Il a béni vos desseins jusque dans leurs rigueurs!

MEMORIAL CARD TO FERDINAND DE LESSEPS,
The Victim of the "Affaire du Panama."

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canism, and that he would make an excellent, hard-working President. It was because I knew that this was the opinion held of him by most of his colleagues in the Senate and Chamber of Deputies that I confidently predicted his election. One could not well find a harder-working man. He is, next to Carnot, the French President who has worked the hardest. And a thing I have noticed in life is that it is really, after all, with very rare exceptions, only the men who work hard who succeed, and only those who work hardest who succeed the most. Some few "get there" by chance, some few by the help of women, but as a general rule it is only the hardest of work that brings a man to the top anywhere. These men who are prominent are men who have laboured, and labour, unceasingly.

I remember being told by Monsieur Carnot of his hours of work. They were certainly not less than those of some American business men of the "get-rich-quick" order. The quiet little man, with his Oriental calm, was a prince of hustlers. Three o'clock in the morning often found him seated at his desk in the *cabinet de travail* adjoining his bedroom. He used to go to bed at midnight and rise three hours later. He told me that he found the early hours of the morning most propitious. I made him smile by asking him what he "worked on," meaning what refreshment he took. He told me that he only drank a little weak China tea, and asked me why I was curious on the subject. I said that I had read in Baron de Ménéval's memoirs that Napoleon used to rout him out of bed—the baron was the emperor's secretary—at two or three in the morning, a proceeding to which he objected very strongly, and, while dictating letters to him from the inside of a very hot bath, press him to refresh himself with iced drinks or *sorbets*, to which Monsieur de Ménéval objected still more strongly.

My reference to the *Affaire du Panama* reminds me that a little while ago I received from Count Ismael de Lesseps, the eldest son of Count Ferdinand de Lesseps by his second marriage, a very sad letter acknowledging one I had written to him condoling with him and his family on the death of his mother, the beautiful and devoted Countess de Lesseps.

I noticed that he signed his letter "Lieutenant 4ᵉ Hussards," which spoke eloquently of political rancour in France. Count Lesseps' son has been left to occupy the lowest rank of commissioned officer, after years and years of service, just to teach him, I suppose, to be the son of Monsieur de Lesseps. But in politics there is neither gratitude nor conscience; rancour and revenge, however, flourish.

On my way to the West Indies last winter I had landed at Colon, and had visited the canal works, being very kindly allowed to accompany a Liberal M.P., who had warm letters of introduction to Colonel Goethals, the head of the staff there. We were shown everything—the Cut, the Gatan dam, and the rest of it. The sanitary work carried out within the canal zone is a marvel of thoroughness. When the railway in the works was originally built one man died for every sleeper laid down, and on that line the sleepers are very close together. Nowadays the zone is much healthier than many American cities, and the death-rate is phenomenally low. The authorities told me that when they first came there they found the place swarming with mosquitoes, of which they classified 700 different varieties, all deadly, though a certain striped mosquito was the worst of all. To-day it is unusual to see a single one of these insects. In this the Americans have done a very good thing, though of course there is the mosquito's point of view to be considered. The mosquito himself is no doubt convinced that he is a brisk little fellow, buzzing and lively, and cannot understand our objection to him. But altogether I did not feel about the extermination of these billions of these insects as I did when the other day I was told of the late Grand-Duke of Baden, that in the course of his sporting career—and on the evidence of the grand-ducal game-books — All-Highest-The-Same had killed 40,000 head of game—40,000 lives, 40,000 bright-eyed things, with soft fur and pretty feathers, and grace and speed, sacrificed for the pleasure of one single being !

While I was visiting the canal I heard everywhere with what respect Count de Lesseps was spoken of, how honourably he was remembered there, and nowhere was any other opinion of the reason of his failure held than that he was the dupe of a company which "was out for graft." Major Sibbert, the engineer at the head of the Gatan dam works, told me that de Lesseps' engineering skill, even in those late years of his, was very great. "We find that everything he did was well done. Often when we have decided on a side-track, and begin clearing the jungle, we find a side-track there already, made by the French company."

My intention had been on reaching Jamaica to write to Madame de Lesseps and to tell her of what I had heard at Panama, but when I landed at Kingston I heard that the poor lady had just died. So I wrote to the new head of the family, Ismael de Lesseps, and told him that less than ever need the children of my old friend feel any concern because their father's name was associated in the public mind with that terrible financial catastrophe. Apropos of which I heard a little while ago from a poor woman who had invested eighty pounds, years and years of savings, in the Panama lottery bonds, that she had at last "touched" some money on this investment, the first centime that had been returned to her. The amount she had received on her bonds was one franc and eightpence—eighteenpence, in other words, less twopence halfpenny for the stamp.

Ismael de Lesseps wrote to thank me for my letter. The children had been pleased with what I had said about Ferdinand de Lesseps. "Nobody," he wrote, "who did not know him well could know his infinite goodness, his entire disinterestedness, his beautiful soul.

"My poor dear mother died like a saint," he told me, "in her full strength, and in full possession of all her mental faculties. . . . Her end was an edifying one, it was the death of a righteous woman. 'Let me go,' she said; 'I shall be more useful to you up there.'

"'Love one another,' such were her last words. This was a saying which our dear father often used to repeat to us. It was this universal love of his which prompted him to undertake things which

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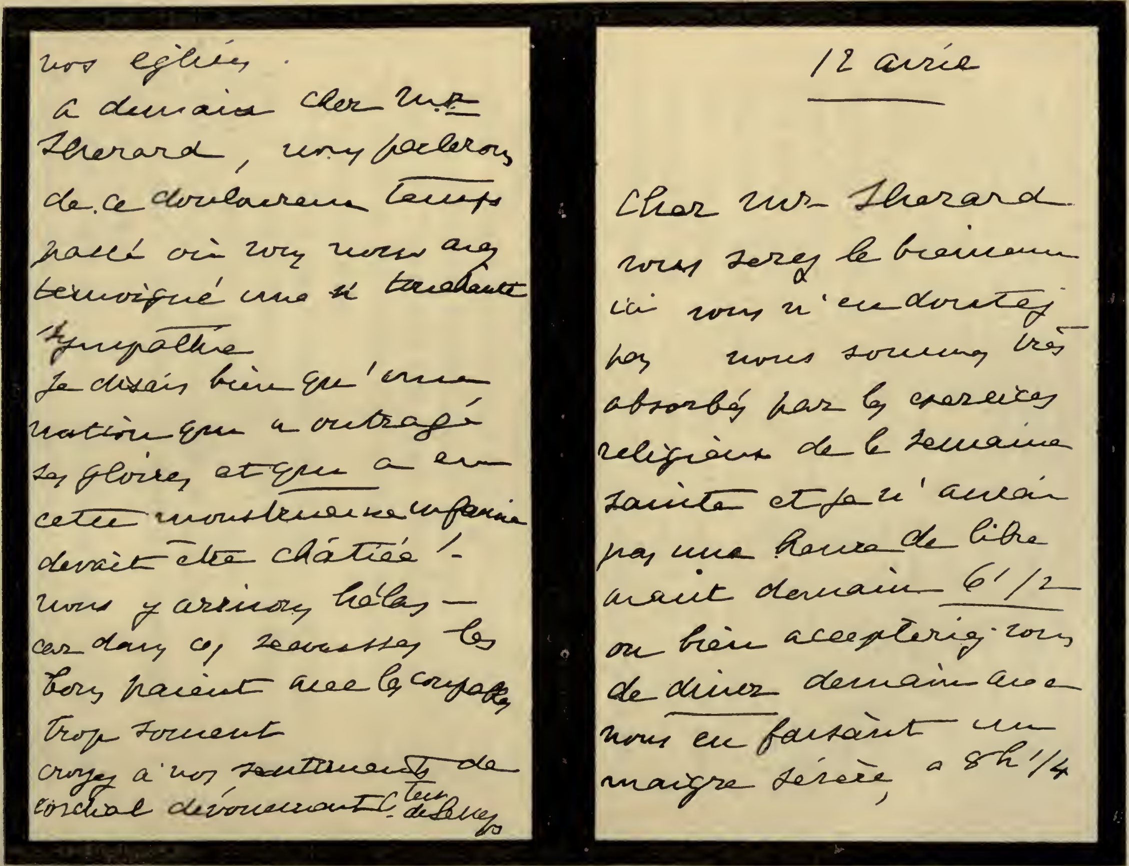
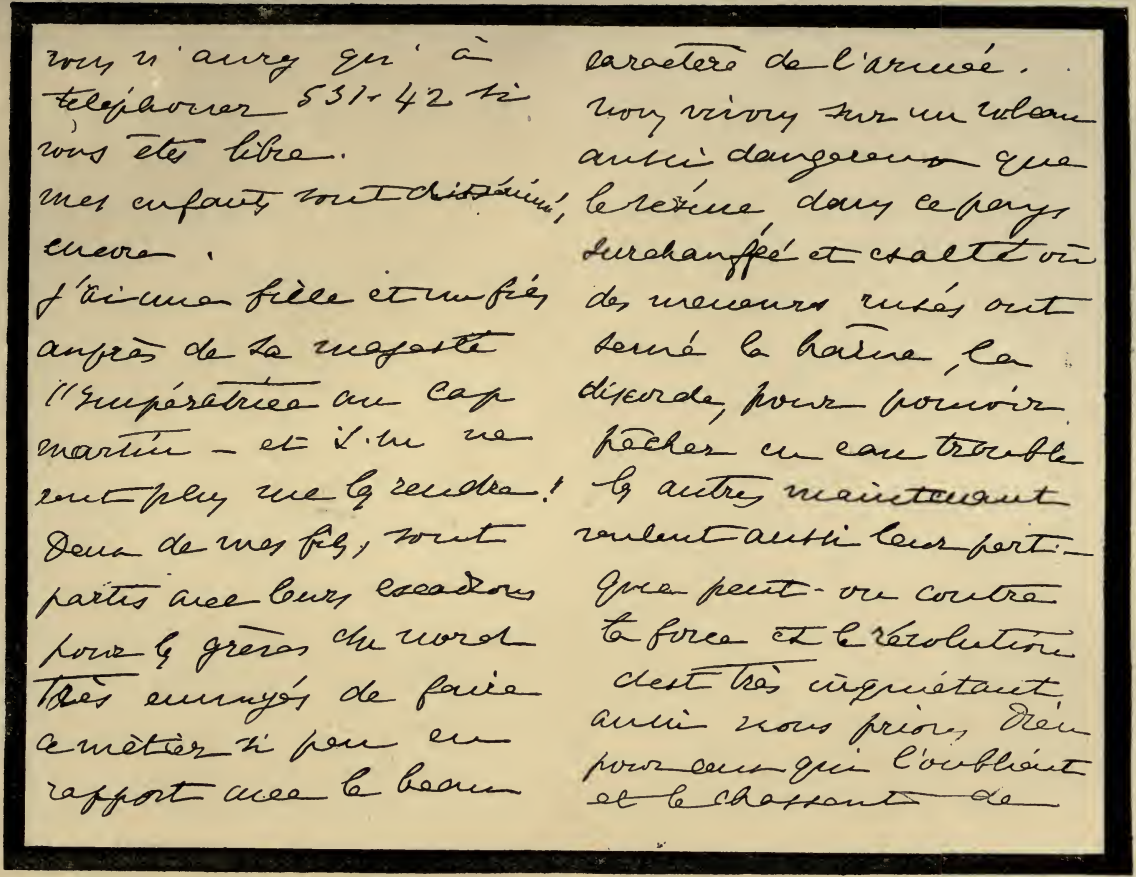


12 avril

Cher Mr Sherard
vous serez le bienvenu
ici vous n'en doutez
pas — nous sommes très
absorbés par les exercices
religieux de la semaine
sainte et je n'aurai
pas une heure de libre
avant demain 6 1/2
ou bien accepterez-vous
de dîner demain avec
nous en faisant un
maigre sévère, à 8h 1/4
vos églises.
à demain cher Mr
Sherard, nous parlerons
de ce douloureux temps
passé où vous nous avez
témoigné une si touchante
sympathie
Je disais bien qu'une
nation qui a outragé
ses gloires, et qui a eu
cette monstrueuse infamie
devait être châtiée ! —
nous y arrivons hélas —
car dans ces revanches les
bons paient avec les coupables
trop souvent
croyez à nos sentiments de
cordial dévouement C.tesse de [illegible]



vous n'aurez qu'à
téléphoner 531-42 si
vous êtes libre.
mes enfants sont disséminés,
encore.
j'ai une fille et un fils
auprès de sa majesté
l'Impératrice au Cap
Martin — et S.M. ne
veut plus me les rendra!
Deux de mes fils, sont
partis avec leurs escadrons
pour les grèves du nord
très ennuyés de faire
ce métier si peu en
rapport avec le beau

caractère de l'armée.
nous vivons sur un volcan
aussi dangereux que
le Vésuve, dans ce pays
surchauffé et exalté où
des meneurs rusés ont
semé la haine, la
discorde, pour pouvoir
pêcher en eau trouble
les autres maintenant
veulent aussi leur part.—
Que peut-on contre
la force et la révolution
c'est très inquiétant
aussi nous prions Dieu
pour ceux qui l'oublient
et le chassent de

FACSIMILE OF LETTER FROM THE LATE COUNTESS DE LESSEPS TO THE AUTHOR, IN WHICH SHE SPEAKS OF THE "MONSTROUS INFAMY" OF THE WAY IN WHICH FERDINAND DE LESSEPS WAS TREATED.

To face page 190.

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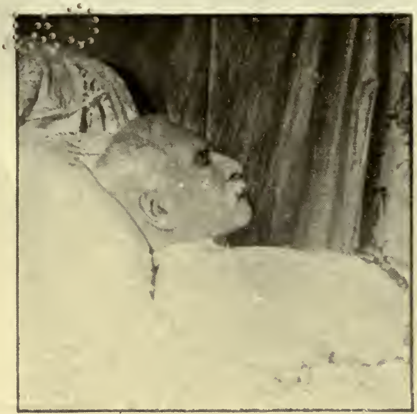


7 décembre 1894

Aperire terram gentibus

1893. Cte de Lesseps

PHOTOGRAPH OF FERDINAND DE LESSEPS ON HIS DEATH-BED.

Underneath is one of the last things he wrote before his mind was clouded. It was written for the author, and was his favourite motto: "Aperire terram gentibus."

THE CHATEAU DE LA CHESNAYE,
Where Ferdinand de Lesseps, the builder of the Suez Canal, died of a broken heart.

To face page 191.

he considered would be for the great good of humanity."

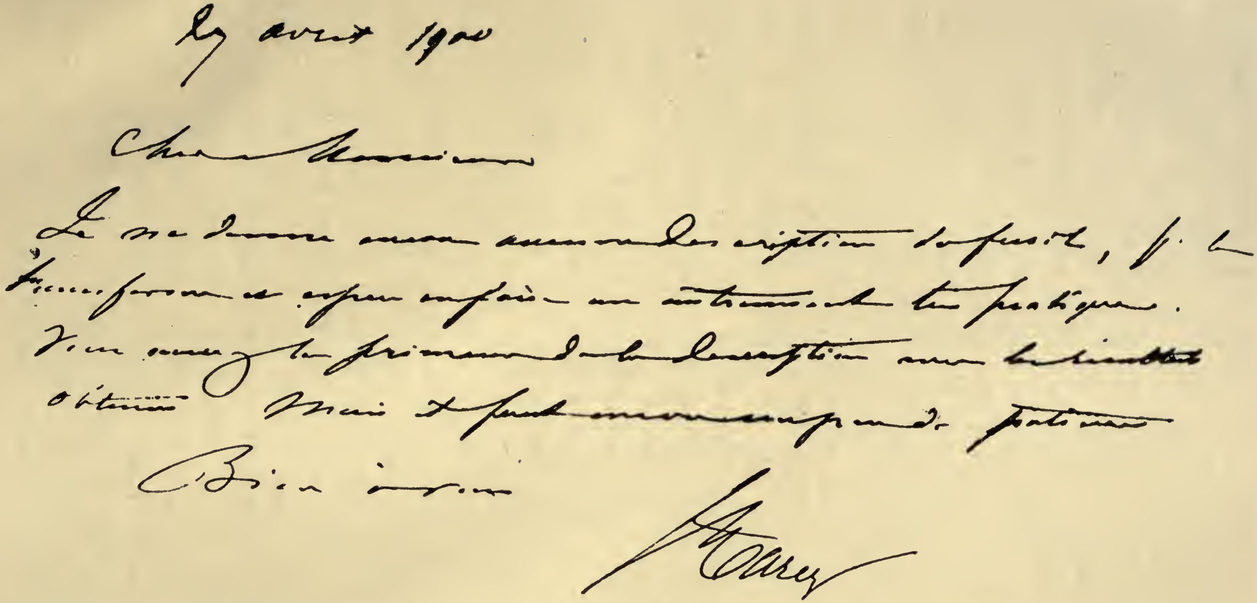
On one of the last occasions when Madame de Lesseps wrote to me, she sent me a memorial card of her husband's death. It is a touching little thing, which I keep ever in sight, to remind me of many things, and to prompt many thoughts on human greatness and human misfortune.

Monsieur de Lesseps was one of the great men I knew who was absolutely indifferent to money. I have met many such in Paris. The great French scientists are the least money-seeking of men. I was well acquainted with old Monsieur Chevreul. He made many discoveries which, exploited by others, produced enormous fortunes : he found his reward in having invented things which made life easier and happier for men and women. Moissan was another savant who worked for no pecuniary reward. He lived on the salary paid him as professor of the Ecole de France and his own private means. This was the man who invented the electric stove and showed how real diamonds could be made out of powdered sugar—a feat he once performed for my inspection. The experiment took over a month from start to finish, but was entirely successful. The diamonds were, of course, so small as to be almost invisible, but that they were actual diamonds there was no possible contestation. "Diamonds," said Moissan to me, "are the result of subjecting carbon to intense heat and enormous pressure. Now look at the size of even the largest diamonds which Nature produces, with the colossal forces of heat and pressure at her disposal. There is not one much larger than a pigeon's egg. Is it therefore surprising that we who try to imitate her, with such feeble resources, cannot produce anything bigger than these particles ?"

The manufacture of artificial rubies, by the way, based on Moissan's discovery, has become a commercial "proposition." I was told at Tiffany's not long ago that the effect has been to create a "slump" in real rubies. "People will not buy genuine rubies," said the manager, "because these artificial ones are so exactly like them, and the result has been that the price of rubies has gone down very much."

I always remember calling on Moissan, the real Diamond King, who by the exploitation of his electric stove alone might have become one of the richest men in France. I found him in a quiet little house in the Observatoire Quarter, in a simple little room. He was spending his brief leisure in giving his little son a lesson in German.

Marey was another great savant who lived the most simple and frugal of lives. He had been professor at the Ecole de France for fifty years, and nobody had ever heard of him until his book on "Motion" appeared. Then it was remembered that this man had invented and bestowed on the public a great number of useful gifts: the gyroscope was one of the more popular of his inventions. It marked one of the early steps in those investigations into the laws of motion which culminated in his book. Before he died he was engaged in the production of an "electrical gun," by means of which he hoped to be able to take thousands of snapshots in one minute. The roll of film was in the butt of the gun, and it was unrolled with



29 avril 1900

Cher Monsieur

Je ne donne encore aucune description du fusil, je le transforme et espère en faire un instrument très pratique. Vous aurez la primeur de la description avec les résultats obtenus. Mais il faut encore un peu de patience.

Bien à vous

Marey

FACSIMILE OF NOTE FROM ETIENNE JULES MAREY, THE GREAT FRENCH SAVANT, ASKING AUTHOR TO HAVE PATIENCE AS TO THE COMPLETION OF THE "PHOTOGRAPHIC GUN."

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enormous rapidity by means of an electric battery. He had great faith in the use which this ingenious implement would be in the work of instantaneous photography, but he did not live to perfect his invention. He has left a bright name in the scientific world, but how very few people outside that region have ever even heard of him. "*Marey, qui ça?*" was repeated to me many a time when I was speaking in Paris about the man who was inventing a wonderful new photographic apparatus.

It is true that the almost total indifference of the average Frenchman towards anybody or anything outside of his particular concerns in life is one of the most striking of the many curious characteristics of our vivacious neighbours. I have frequently amused myself whilst travelling in different parts of France in testing this amazing ignorance. Perhaps the innkeeping woman at Vertou, near Nantes, where I spent a summer holiday some years ago, who had never heard of President Carnot, and did not even know that France was living under a republic, was as much a phenomenon as that other old lady, near Grenoble, who told Napoleon that she had never heard his name—it was during the return from Elba—and had imagined that Louis XVI. was still on the throne; but at any rate I have frequently met with cases of ignorance and indifference almost as startling. As, for instance, in a first-class carriage on the line to Havre one day, when, having got into conversation with two elderly French gentlemen, I could obtain in answer to a question put for the purpose of this pastime of mine, not more than three correct names of the holders of the various portfolios in the Waldeck-Rousseau Cabinet—Delcasse, Monis and André. With reference to foreign matters this ignorance and indifference are naturally even more marked, and I was never more struck with this than the year when the murder of McKinley took place. I was at the time in Brittany, at St Malo, which is crowded with Parisians and foreigners in the summer, and I naturally thought that an event of such startling cosmopolitan interest would be known to everybody. Yet even a week after the occurrence I found many people in the district who had not heard of it, and a larger number still who had no idea who the victim was. "One of those South American presidents, wasn't he ?" said a priest to me, with whom I travelled in the train to Dinan.

The reason is that the French do not read the news in their papers, or, if any news, only that concerning the place they live in. "What I read in my paper," this has been said to me over and over again in France—"are the *faits divers* first, and then the serial story." What the Frenchman wants in return for his daily sou is a maximum of exciting fiction. It is their serial stories which account for the enormous sale of certain French papers. How fully the French newspaper proprietors appreciate this fact is shown by the constantly increasing space allotted in the columns of their papers to fiction, and secondly by the enormous expense to which they go to advertise the fact that a new story is appearing or about to appear. These advertisements, in the form of posters and handbills, appear all over the country, so lavishly distributed that not the smallest hamlet may ignore the fact that such-and-such a paper is publishing a tale with such-and-such a title. Nor are printer's ink and paper alone used to advertise this fact, but the human voice also, and here is another source of expense to the competing Parisian newspaper proprietors. The hawkers, whom one may hear of a morning, shouting in the streets of provincial towns in any part of France the name of a Parisian paper, coupled with the titles of the thrilling serials which are to be perused in its pages, are not mere hawkers, as in England, selling on a small commission. They are the salaried servants of the newspaper proprietors. They are technically known as *aboyeurs*, or "barkers," their business being to make as much noise as possible about the name of the paper which employs them and about its various features. As shown by their accent, they are usually Parisians, experienced street-sellers for the most part, who travel in gangs at the cost of the head office. The gangs, or *équipes*, vary in numbers from six to twelve or more, according to the size of the town or district where the particular paper and its features have to be "barked" into a remunerative notoriety. Each *équipe* is under the command of a *chef aboyeur*, or head barker, whose pay varies from eight to ten francs per diem. His men earn a fixed daily wage of from four to five shillings, plus half the receipts made by selling the paper. "Six francs a day and half the paper," is a phrase one often overhears in the wineshops in the Rue Montmartre Quarter (the Fleet Street of Paris), which are the registry offices for labour of this particular kind. The mission of these gangs of "boomers" is to create or stimulate a demand for the paper which employs them in a town or country district, and when this has been accomplished they move on somewhere else. It is a most expensive form of publicity, as the figures mentioned will show, for it must be remembered that gangs are employed at these wages simultaneously all over France; but that it is effective, and that it is held in Parisian newspaper offices to be remunerative, is shown by the fact that the system is becoming more and more generally adopted, and that better and better wages can be commanded by a good organising "head barker."

I am afraid that if serial stories are more popular than ever as a newspaper feature in France, the remuneration of the writers of this machine-made fiction is not as good as it used to be. That is because the editors find that they can get very good fiction from foreign publishers. One sees numerous translations now running serially in the French papers, though not in the most widely circulated. The price that an editor would pay for the translation rights of a good English, German, Italian or Russian novel would not amount to the twentieth part of the fee which would be expected by one of the popular masters of the *feuilleton*. In former days these fees were very large indeed. Jules Mary used to get 30,000 francs for first serial use of one of his thrillers. That would represent about half what the manuscript would produce; for after the tale had appeared in the paper the publishers who issue tales in penny parts pay him another £1000 for this use. The book is then published in volume form, but this only brings in about £200. Monsieur d'Ennery used to charge a shilling and threepence a line. One of his novels, "An Angel's Remorse," brought him 70,000 francs. Monsieur de Montépin, who once told me that he had written 500 novels—that is to say, about enough to supply the British demand for a full two months—also worked *à la ligne*, and by writing one novel a year earned an income of 70,000 francs. Prices are by no means so high now. Free trade in fiction has injured the home manufacturers, who not very long ago resolved to form themselves into a union for the protection of their rights. But bad as times are they will never be as bad as the days when the editor of *Le Constitutionel* was thought to be going out of his mind because he agreed to pay Eugène Sue £240 for the serial use of "The Wandering Jew."

I think English authors would find it easier to sell their French translation rights of their novels if they requested their agents not to be so exorbitant and grasping in their demands. I have heard of several cases where "deals" have fallen through because of the rapacity of the agent. In this way not only is the English author deprived of the money which would have been paid had a reasonable offer been accepted, but of the pleasure and satisfaction of being published and read in France, which must be a gratification to any writer.

The publishers are not disposed to pay "long" prices, however, for these translation rights. Hachette, whenever a biggish price is asked for an English novel, produces a receipt signed by Charles Dickens. It is for a sum of twenty pounds, and refers to a novel called "David Copperfield."

I have referred above to a woman who kept an inn at a little place called Vertou, near Nantes, apropos of the utter ignorance of the French peasants about things not directly concerned with their struggle for existence. The *auberge* in question was a beautiful place, by a lock on the river, some tributary of the Loire, and there was a huge walnut-tree over the pool. The woman and her sister, who was her partner, were dressed in the peculiar costume of that part of Brittany, and wore peaked white *coiffes*, which I should have described as *à la* Mother Hubbard. During my stay there I gained insight into a very horrible trait in the French peasant character. It is the trait which Zola has so wonderfully exemplified in his book "La Terre": the gradual hatred which grows up in the hearts of the children of people who have dispossessed themselves in their favour of their property. It will be remembered about "La Terre" that Fouan, having—on account of his old age—divided up his land amongst his three sons, is, in spite of the terms of his agreement for comfortable maintenance by them, gradually deprived of every necessary of life, and finally murdered by his son Buteau. It is a very common incident in French peasant life, so much so, indeed, that the French notaries invariably advise old people most strongly against relinquishing their property in favour of their children, as being a direct incentive to cruelty and crime. At this inn I had often noticed a wretched old man, who used to sleep in an outhouse, and seemed during the daytime to be employed in all the hard and dirty work of the inn. He was a very feeble old man, and seemed to be suffering from want of food. He was dressed in rags. It was some days before I was told that he was the women's father. It appeared that the inn had formerly been his, but getting very old, and being in poor health, he had made it over, with all the rest of his property, to his two daughters, on the condition that they should keep him in comfort till the end of his days. From the very beginning they had begun to neglect him: at last he had sunk down into the abject condition of drudge in which I saw him. He was spoken to by his daughters like a dog, his grandchildren made mock of him. I often saw the poor dim eyes filled with tears. The man coughed badly, and whenever we heard outside in the shed some very violent fit of coughing one of the daughters would say hopefully: "Ca pourrait bien être sa fin" ("This cough may well make an end of him"), as though she were anticipating something very agreeable. The poor old fellow told me that he was very fond of coffee, but his daughters never allowed him any. When the coffee for the inn was being brewed the poor old fellow used to come peering in at the door, snuffing at the air just like an animal who scents food. "I think that I must stand myself a cup, it smells so good," one of the daughters would say, and then the old man's agitation would become so violent, and his snuffing so pronounced, that the woman would cry out: "What are you doing there? Is there no work for you to do? Get out." And he would slink off sobbing, until I called him back and by payment made him happy. It was so horrible to witness this cruelty that I left the place long before I had intended to do so. As I was driving away he came running after me, and begged me when I got back to Paris to send him some clothes, because he suffered so much from the cold in his outhouse.

But in this case punishment awaited these impious women, and the punishment was to come just because of their cruelty. Some months later I read in the papers that two sisters keeping an inn at Vertou had been murdered in their beds by some robbers, who had plundered the house. The report went on that it had been established that the thieves had long projected their crime, but had been frightened away by the fact that there was an old man sleeping in the shed under the window by which access could be gained to the women's bedroom. But the old man having died the crime had been immediately carried out. If the two daughters had treated their poor old watch-dog only a little better, his life might have been prolonged indefinitely, and their own fate averted.

I have always been interested in stories of evil inns, and I think that it is not difficult to understand the peculiar terror which they inspire. The condition of the man who falls into such traps as are there spread for him is indeed a horrible one. He is alone, a stranger. It is night, and the dangers which environ him are all the more redoubtable in that they move against him under a cloak of darkness. The violation of that principle of hospitality which in all ages and amongst all peoples—even the least civilised—seems an innate quality of good in humanity, the treachery that reveals itself when the luring mask of welcome is roughly torn off, lend an almost sacrilegious horror to the crime.

I have had one or two adventures myself of the kind, elsewhere related, and these have always predisposed me to take a peculiar interest in such tales as Hamilton Aidé's "The Two Sisters of Cologne." There is, however, no need to go to fiction to find the thrill which these stories always evoke. France is dotted with houses where treachery, murder and robbery used to lurk behind the smiling and hypocritical mask of welcome.

The French inn of most sinister reputation—leaving aside the famous Auberge des Adrets, the scene of the exploits of Robert Macaire—is a house which quite recently was still standing—and may so be still—though uninhabited, in a mountain pass in Auvergne. This is the Auberge de Perbeilhan, known in history as the "Auberge des Tueurs" (The Murderer's Inn). The building was offered for sale some years ago, and strangely enough, although less than forty pounds was asked for the freehold, no purchaser could be found. It seems to me that some showman lost a good opportunity, for the story of this typical evil inn is known all over France. It has tempted generations of sensational writers, and not very long before the sale was announced a publisher's posters were placarded all over Paris announcing a new book on the subject of this death-trap. The poster appealed particularly to Englishmen, for the startling picture portrayed the innkeeper and his accomplices in the act of "dealing with" a family of English tourists, referring to one of the many crimes which, as proved at the trial, had been committed in this house.

The inn was much visited of late years by the morbid-minded. The windows of the rooms which used to be assigned to the wretched travellers were barred with iron. In one of the outhouses could still be seen the furnace in which the bodies of the victims used to be disposed of. It was established that hundreds of lonely travellers, belated in this lonely spot, had been plundered and murdered.

With regard to English tourists, the clue to some of the mysterious disappearances of our countrymen in France, which were reported in the London papers at the beginning of last century, could no doubt have been afforded by a discovery made at the village of Piscot, on the great highroad from Paris to Calais. In the old days of diligences and mail coaches, travellers from the north to the French capital arrived at Piscot, the last stage outside Paris, towards nightfall. The house, it appeared, had had rather a bad reputation in former days, but that had been quite lived down, and the worthy innkeeper, the tenant of this house, was a popular man in the district. Amongst his friends was the late Mr Carter, correspondent in Paris of *The Graphic*, who had a country house in the neighbourhood of Piscot. It was Mr Carter who told me the story of the discovery to which I refer —it was made in his presence. The inn was badly supplied with water, and the landlord employed some men to dig a well in the orchard at the back of the house. When the diggers had got down a few feet they came upon a skeleton, and, having removed this, a further exploration of the soil revealed to them that they were digging into a very graveyard. The authorities were communicated with and, amidst great excitement in that quiet village, the orchard was thoroughly dug up. Altogether the remains of eighteen bodies were found. Then the old people of Piscot began to talk of the evil stories which when they were children they had heard in connection with the house. The bones were removed and solemnly interred in the neighbouring churchyard, and there the action of the authorities had perforce to end, for it was evident that the authors of these crimes had long since gone to their last account. There may be some old people living in England who in their youth posted to Paris, and naturally passed this evil inn. It would be interesting to know if any recollection of it exists in anyone's mind. When the railway came, and the Calais highroad was deserted by wealthy English travellers, the innkeeper who had used his orchard as a graveyard no doubt sold his business and went to enjoy the fruits of his ill-doings in peace and contentment elsewhere, leaving it to hazard many years later to bring to light the evidence of his abominable crimes. What tragic mysteries in many English homes might not this discovery have solved if it had come earlier.

The Mr Carter who told me this story was a clever, amusing little man, who did good work for *The Graphic*. He had lived in Paris all through the siege and was rather sceptical about the patriotism of the Parisians. He told me that he once heard a man say: "I have two guns, one a good one, the other a bad one. The bad one I shall use on the ramparts against the Prussians, as for the good one, I intend to use it to put a prune into my landlord's back."

CHAPTER XII

A Merchant of Human Hair—Darthial on Hugo—Heads as Crops—Hair as the Thermometer of Prosperity—The Travelling Buyers—As to the Bretonnes—Hair from Abroad—Nothing doing in England—Monsieur Darthial's Workshop—The Secrets of the Trade—Various Lines and Various Prices—Curls, Fronts, Topknots, Bangs and Transformations—The Taste in America—Gruesome Details—The Hyænas of Naples—An Old Woman's Tragedy—A Maker of Saints—How a Model is designed—The Realisms of Monsieur Pacheu—The Humours of the Trade—Degrees of Popularity—The Illusions of the Store-room—Literature and Hair—"There's 'Air!"—Tolerance in France

In Hamilton Aidé's story of "The Two Sisters of Cologne" the booty specially sought after by the two evil young women was the teeth and the hair of their victims. I remember when I read this first I did not feel very satisfied. The *motif* did not seem to me convincing. But at that time I did not know the commercial value of human hair. Since then I have reason to believe that a murder inn in good practice which could deliver bales of human hair in considerable quantities, especially if care were taken specially to inveigle old folks with white hair or young women with hair of the colour known as *blond-cendré*, would find the thing eminently a paying "proposition."

Amongst my friends in Paris who exercised strange, out-of-the-way trades was Monsieur Darthial in the Rue Sainte Anne. Monsieur Darthial was a merchant in human hair, in fact Monsieur

Darthial is, or was, one of the principal men in this somewhat gruesome line of business. Sometimes, when I was passing down the Rue Sainte Anne, I used to look in at his offices and warehouses and ask him a few questions about the market value of snow-white locks or ashen-grey.

I once spoke to him of that passage in Victor Hugo's "Misérables," over which we have all cried, or at least gasped, where poor wretched Fantine sells her pretty hair so as to have money to send to the swindling Thenardiers, that these might buy bread for little Cosette, an incident which has been much worked since then by the minor novelists who imitate Victor Hugo in his sentimentality.

Monsieur Darthial sniffed at the pathos of the matter, and shrugged his shoulders. "That is all very fine in books," said the "capillary artist," "but as a matter of fact nobody concerned looks on the trade more as cold business than the women themselves. Anyway, Fantine got a good price for her locks, more than she would get from any of my buyers. I know a good many peasant girls in Brittany and Auvergne who look on their heads—*figurativement*, of course, *figurativement*—just as a peasant regards his field, as a crop-raising concern, to be carefully exploited. The hair hawkers do an excellent business in the agricultural districts. The girls like selling their hair, they like to be rid of the bother of dressing it and they like the price that they get for it. The stories about women being driven with tears in their eyes to part with their 'natural adornment' is *de la blague, de la blague pure et simple.*

Of course, Fantine needed her hair. She was a cocotte, was she not?—but the country girls look on their chevelures as more of a nuisance than anything else—that is to say, in Brittany and Auvergne, where the avarice of the peasants and their poverty are the greatest; and indeed these two provinces are the only ones visited. I don't think it would be remunerative for a dealer to travel in any other French province. Frenchwomen are coquettish and want all the hair they have got and more. And more—otherwise why should I be in trade? It is, by the way, a pretty good sign of how a place is prospering, whether our travellers can buy hair there or not. Places which are doing well don't sell their women's hair. Sometimes places which formerly used to be good, from our point of view, cease supplies altogether, a sign that the peasants are getting money and want their natural adornments for themselves. Then again other places come into the market. During the bad wine years in the south-east of France we got some quite tidy parcels of feminine locks from that district."

He told me of the way in which his agents worked, paying periodical visits, in Auvergne and foreign parts, to the towns and villages, usually on fair or market days.

"There they take a room in the principal inn and hang out their sign from the window, and, like spiders in their net, wait for the long-haired female flies to walk into their parlour and submit to their shears. The sign is usually a horse's tail attached to the end of a pole. It acts like a magnet on the women. There is no tearful

Fantine business about the thing at all. Our man in the inn parlour has usually more work given him than he can get through. In spite of this, however, very high prices have to be paid for the crops. Formerly, before the war, you could get a woman's head of hair in exchange for a handkerchief or an apron—at the outside a cotton dress was asked for. That is why I say that Fantine did very well over her deal. Since '71, however, the girls have learned about our profits and want a share in them. I am too rich to please these young ladies. They want to divide with Papa Darthial. Nowadays the lowest price asked for her head of hair by a girl is fifteen francs—twelve shillings in your money—in addition to a good merino dress, and very often as much as forty francs has to be given, besides the goods, before the girl will come under the shears. In Brittany things are different. There our men have to go from house to house. It would be no use their hanging out a pole with a horse's tail attached from the inn window. Not a Bretonne woman would go near them. Here our cutters have to see each woman at her home. She has to be bargained with. She invariably begins by refusing outright. She slams the door in the man's face. She threatens to call her dogs or her husband and she evokes all the saints in the calendar. But our men know her little ways, they persist and, in the end, she invariably acquiesces. Of course our men are good talkers, very good talkers they are. They have all kinds of specious arguments in reserve wherewith to convince the women that they ought to part with their hair. In Brittany they often work on the religious sentiments of the women. Here, in places where the people are very bigoted, the cutters tell the women that the hair is wanted to make a wig for such-and-such a statue of the Virgin Mary in such-and-such a church. I am sorry to say that that appeal, which used to work very well formerly, is wearing a bit thin, is decidedly wearing a bit thin.

"Our cutters travel abroad too, chiefly for fair hair. A great quantity of fair hair comes to Paris from Sweden and Russia, Sweden especially supplies the most *recherché* and expensive blonde shades. Most of the dark hair which we make up from abroad is cut in Moravia, Bohemia and other parts of Austria. German women are usually ready to deal. Gretchen does not mind parting with her tresses, especially in the Rhine provinces. England, on the other hand, is no good, no good at all. Some attempts have been made to obtain goods from England, but with no results. The cutters usually got themselves assaulted, what you call knocked down, by the husbands, fathers, brothers, sweethearts of the women to whom they made their proposals. 'Cut off my missus's 'air, mister? 'Ere, whom do you think you are a getting at?' And the fist comes into play. It's a pity, a great pity, as some of the best shades of ashen-blonde—the best tint after snow-white—in the market grows in England."

As Monsieur Darthial spoke, there was recalled to my mind a very emphatic remark made to me once—it was in some South American shebeen—by a man who had introduced himself to me as a stoker on a line of steamers plying from Southampton.

"I don't like," he said, "and I don't encourage them fellers what come to one's door when yer out, just to get a talk with the missus. Now 'ere am I: I've got a cottidge in Southampton, one in a row, nicely furnished, penny-in-the-slot meter, sopha in the front parler and everythink else up to the door. Well, guv'ner, you'd be surprised to 'ear the number of callers what Mrs Walker 'as to anser the front-door bell to. One day it's So-and-So's 'British Birds,' the next that there Encyclopedier, next a gramophone, or some Scotch packman. Or it may be the rates what wants a bit on account. Well, I don't like it. I tell yer straight I do not like it. And so one bloke learned what came a-calling one day when he thought I was at sea. He rung at the front door. I opened it and I sez, 'Wot do you want?' Sez he, 'I am the curate of this parish, and I have come to call on Mrs Walker.' 'Well, and what next?' That fairly flummoxed him, but sez he, 'I make it a rule to visit all my parishioners.' 'Ho, do yer?' sez I. 'Yes,' sez 'e, 'it's part of my porochial work.' 'Porochial, d'yer call it?' sez I. Then I adds, 'Look 'ere, mister, once and for all, understand this 'ere. Mrs Walker 'as got a man on the premises, and that man's me. And I can attend to anythink in your line or any other bloke's line.' And so I slams the door in that porochial gentleman's face."

"Italy don't send us direct," continued Monsieur Darthial. "There is a central hair market in Naples, but the staple there is combings, not cut hair, and combings have little value to us because it is impossible to get them to curl. All they are good for is as padding, for chignons or plaiting.

"The cutters, though they represent individual firms, really are independent merchants. They are not salaried. There are, for instance, several men travelling at this moment who will sell me every lock of hair they cut off, but their remuneration comes out of the profit at which they can sell me the hair they have cut off and paid for out of their own money. They, of course, buy as cheaply as they can and sell to me at the highest possible price. The goods are usually sent to me in sacks of a hundredweight each. Hair that comes from abroad has to pay a heavy duty at the frontier. Madame Marianne protects the heads of her female citizens."

One day Monsieur Darthial took me upstairs into the sorting-rooms, and showed me his people at work. It was a curious sight certainly. A long bare room, with no furniture whatever in it. Two wheelbarrows stood at one end. In one corner was a heap of empty sacks, in another corner were four or five sacks filled to bursting. A couple of porters were engaged in emptying these on to the floor. One hoisted the sack on to his shoulders, and when the other man had opened its mouth, tilted the contents out on to the floor, in a heap. I entered the room just as this operation was going on, and I declare that what issued from the bellied sack looked like a living and serpentine mass. It sounds ugly to say so, but I could not help thinking of a marvellous take of eels. Yet there were poetry and beauty enough in the motion, for the sun-rays touched the silken tresses as they fell, with an almost imperceptible sound like the frou-frou of satin, and brought out a myriad lights—gold and silver and blue and many shades of red. All the delight and beauty of woman's hair was in that gliding, coiling and uncoiling heap. As soon as each sack was emptied girls set to work upon the heap of human hair and began hastily to assort the tresses. One collected all the shades of red, one gathered in the browns, another picked out the locks that were black, a fourth disregarded all hair which was not blond.

Whilst I was watching these girls at work, Monsieur Darthial told me many practical, business-like things about the sorting. It gave him, he said, a great deal of trouble. "There are such a number of shades. Why, it would take me quite a long while to mention the names of all the shades of human hair which are known to the trade. It is quite out of the question properly to classify all the shades that exist. There are as many different shades of human hair as there are heads of hair in the world—that is to say, their number is infinite. Roughly, for our trade purposes, we divide the colours into fifteen classes, black, brown, dark chestnut, chestnut, light chestnut, dark blond, blond, clear blond. These eight varieties the trade styles common colours. The seven remaining classes, or extra colours, are, in order of merit, or commercial value, snow-white, ashen-blond, white, greyish, grey, pale blond and red. Of these varieties, snow-white hair and *blond-cendré* hair are the most valuable. Each of these classes has thousands and thousands of subdivisions, but of course no attempt can be made to sort out exact shades. The work, as it is, is a formidable task: each head of hair must be handled hair by hair, for we often find six or seven shades in one crop.

"When the hair has been very carefully sorted into colours, each colour is tied up in a bundle, and each bundle is then worked with flour which dries and cleanses the hair of grease. The hairs are then carefully resorted according to length, the standard lengths in the trade ranging from sixteen inches to a yard. But good use can be found for even the shortest lengths, and just now short hair is at a premium for making up into fronts for the American market. The hairs are next made up into packets of the various lengths. These are either sold to the hairdressers as raw material for perruque-making, or else are used by the wholesale manufacturers for making up into shapes of all kinds. The prices vary considerably according to colours and lengths. Thus fair qualities of black hair of average length fetch only one penny halfpenny the gramme, or about three and ninepence the ounce, whereas the same quantity of snow-white hair of similar length costs from five to ten shillings the gramme, or from seven pounds ten shillings to fifteen pounds the ounce. The latter quality is, however, rarely in the market. For two pounds of ashen or pale blond hair, thirty-two inches long, the usual price to the trade is ninety pounds sterling. Snow-white hair of that length would be worth twenty times the money, but it can hardly ever be procured in greater lengths than twenty-six inches. Apropos of snow-white hair, I forgot to remark that when a woman sells her hair, if she happen to have a white lock or two in the lot, she always makes a special bargain, for the above prices refer merely to smooth hair, sorted, cleaned and washed with soap. If the hair is curled or crimped the price increases by from one to twenty per cent. For the hair to become curly it must be cut from the head, combings are of no use. The preparation is a laborious one. First, it has to be washed and washed again. Then each hair is rolled round a small wooden cylinder and boiled hard for two hours. After that the cylinders are placed in drying stoves, here they remain two or three months. The hair then curls. Of course, a good deal of natural curly hair comes on the market in the ordinary way, but it does not form the ten thousandth part of the curly hair one sees adorning ladies' heads as fronts, bangs and so on."

"I suppose," I asked, "that the best profits are made out of wigs?"

"Yes, a good wig fetches any price. The perruque-making art has now reached its highest manifestation. There are wigs made in Paris, called 'transformations,' which a lady can put on in a second and which give her, besides a splendid head of hair, the most elegant head-dressing imaginable. There is the Louis XV. transformation, the Directoire, the Restoration, and scores of other styles. Many *grandes dames* in Paris have a complete set, and the world wonders at the skill and variety with which her hair is dressed."

"I suppose that the wholesale houses lose money, or even fail in business as fashions change?"

"Yes. For instance that absurd and reprehensible fashion of twisting the hair up into a knot on the top of the head sent several houses into liquidation. No business at all was to be done during that period of bad taste. Now that the hair is worn low down, and that an elegant back-hair arrangement is an indispensable adjunct of fashion, business is springing up in a remarkable way. It was high time it should do so. Competition is enormous to-day, and on the other hand cheap prices are everywhere clamoured for. Even the Americans, our best customers, won't take anything but at the very lowest rate of profit to ourselves."

"Apropos of Americans," I asked, "what class of goods is specially in request out there?"

"In the way of colours, blond and pale blond. I suppose the German element in the population accounts for this. In made-up goods, little curls for the front are chiefly in request, long lengths are little asked for by the Americans. I may add that the Paris market has every reason to congratulate itself on the spreading of the fashion of dyeing the hair red, or mahogany colour. Nothing creates a more certain demand for false hair than this, because the hair has to be bleached before it can be treated with henna Bleaching discolours the hair by killing it. The hair being dead soon falls away, and so an active demand for our wares ensues."

"Apropos of death," I asked, "does much hair taken from corpses come into the market?"

"Certainly. There is an organised band of robbers attached to certain wholesale houses in

Naples for the purpose of robbing the dead of their hair. Over and over again tombs in the cemeteries of the poor are opened and the corpses stripped. After the cholera epidemic there prices in Naples fell all along the line. It is, however, chiefly snow-white hair that these human hyænas go after. The price is very remunerative, as you have heard. But corpse hair is never handled by reputable French houses. Delicacy forbids."

"About snow-white hair, Monsieur Darthial," I asked, "do you mean to say that old women, women near their graves, bring their heads to be shorn for a few francs and a merino gown—old women?"

"Certainly! Parbleu! Why not? Money is just as useful to these as to those. What makes you ask?"

I made no answer, for I was thinking that if sorrow there can be aroused by this strange, unnatural traffic, which our modern vice of luxury has engendered, it should be felt for the old rather than for the young. Her snow-white hair is the old woman's dignity, her last coquetry, the only comfort of her natural and abiding vanity, and when the cutter has taken it she is left shorn and ridiculous, with a few shillings and a few yards of cloth as barter for what she can never hope to have again. It must indeed seem to her that her womanhood is gone at last, irrevocably. Poor old woman!

When Monsieur Darthial was speaking about the "absurd and reprehensible fashion" of tying the hair up into a knot on the top of the head, I could not help recalling those lines at the end of "The Cenci," where Beatrice says to her mother

> " . . . and bind up this hair
> In any simple knot: ay, that does well,
> And yours I see is coming down. How often
> Have we done this for one another! now
> We shall not do it any more. My lord,
> We are quite ready. Well, 'tis very well."

I used to think the passage one of the most beautiful in Shelley. They showed the woman, the coquetry of the woman, surviving on the threshold of the scaffold. It seemed one of those touches with which genius illuminates its pages. Now, whenever I think of those lines, it is with distress. For reading my Elizabethan poets over I came upon the closing lines of a drama in which exactly this effect had been essayed. The wording was different but the idea was the same. It is the sort of disappointment that follows the reader through life. The gods of his faith show themselves liars time and time again, and in the end he does not know in whom to trust. I cannot forget my regret when I discovered how Dean Swift had "borrowed" from Cyrano de Bergerac.

Another friend of mine in a strange way of business in Paris is a Monsieur Pacheu, in the Rue Bonaparte, a maker of saints. He is at the head of one of the biggest businesses in the world for the manufacture of the figures of the saints which are placed in Catholic churches. Monsieur Pacheu is by profession a barrister, and was afterwards employed as Inspector of Finances, a post which he resigned at the time when the persecution of the religious houses in France first began.

"This making of saints," he told me one day, as we met over the frugal table *chez* Thirion, which used to be patronised by Thackeray when he was in Paris, "was a business which, when I decided to engage in industry, appealed to me most strongly. It is an industry for a man who is fond of frequenting public libraries, who takes his pleasure in poring over old books and documents, who delights in research. Thus I do not know of anything that gives me greater pleasure than when I am written to about some saint concerning whom the customer can give me few if any details. One has to hunt up the particulars, the period in which he lived, the costumes of that period, to find out what were his special attributes, what was his martyrdom, if martyrdom there was. Thus some time ago I received from a priest in the south of France an order for a statue of St Fris. I had never heard of such a saint, nor does he figure in our catalogue, though that massive volume contains over 180 closely printed pages of the names of saints. We applied to a priest who is a great authority on the subject, and we learned that St Fris was a captain of barbarians under the Roman dominion, and that he was martyred at the age of twenty. This gave us the period, the rest was easy. Again, on another occasion, we were asked to make a statue of St Ame, of whom we knew nothing except that she was a widow. We had to find out everything else about her. But once we know the period our tasks become easier. The period indicates the costume. Thus recently we had to make a St Maurice. We knew that he was a captain, that he was a Roman, and we dressed up our figure with a breastplate and the helmet of a Roman captain."

Some days afterwards I visited M. Pacheu's factory and learned many interesting things.

The models from which the statues are made are designed by artists who have lived in the trade all their lives and whose speciality is this kind of work. Most of them are men who have passed through the Beaux-Arts. Several of them are able to earn a steady £400 a year.

It is a curious fact that real inspiration would seem in certain cases to guide these artists in their work. For instance amongst the models "created" by this firm is a widely popular statue of St Anthony of Padua. The artist had no indications whatever as to the saint's face and appearance when he prepared his model.

"The model," said Monsieur Pacheu, "was constructed *de chic*—'faked,' as you would say in England—but the result was very satisfactory, and the figure as we had designed it became, as you know, very popular. Well, quite recently Bishop Potron found a portrait of St Anthony of Padua in a little out-of-the-way village church in Spain, which bore a striking resemblance to the face of our statue. The portrait had been painted by a contemporary of St Anthony. There are, however, many wonderful things in our trade, which I do not profess to understand or to be able to explain. Thus there is a group representing the Mater Dolorosa supporting the body of Christ after the descent from the cross. The first group made was delivered to the Passionist Sisters at Lourdes. After the group had been put into place in their chapel it was seen that real tears came into the eyes of the Blessed Virgin, while the lips appeared to move. This was noticed on several occasions, not only by the sisters but by numerous independent witnesses, and a strong belief is already abroad that this was another miracle."

Here M. Pacheu interrupted himself to give some order of a very commercial nature to one of his *employés*.

He went on to tell me that since the firm was founded a century ago no fewer than 50,000 different models of saints have been executed in their workshops, and that this number is constantly being added to. The sale of statues by this one house alone exceeds 50,000 a year. Of these about a quarter are statues of the Virgin Mary, and next in demand comes St Joseph.

"For every ten statues of the Virgin which we sell," said Monsieur Pacheu, "we sell about eight St Josephs, and as many statues of the Sacré Cœur, the remaining thirty-five per cent. covering all the other saints—St Peters, St Pauls and all the rest. Now and again, it is true, some particular saint comes into fashion, and then the demand for him increases in enormous proportions. Thus for some time past there has been a great rush on St Anthony of Padua. We sell as many St Anthonys just now as we sell St Josephs."

What lends a peculiar interest to a visit to such a factory is the curious suggestion of humour, which, in one's conversation with the workmen and *employés*, comes to relieve the sense and awe and reverence that weighs upon one.

I remember that having contemplated, not without a painful feeling in my breast, the most lamentable figure of an old man, whose hands were pierced, whose side was pierced, and from whose furrowed brow large drops of blood were trickling down, I asked a passing workman to tell me whom the statue represented.

And he calling to a fellow-workman said: "Who is that old gent up there?"

It was St Francis d'Assisi. The remark dispelled the feeling of oppression and sadness which a contemplation of the realistic presentment of cruel sufferings had evoked. I remembered that this was, after all, only an article of trade. And so also in this factory, when one hears clerks calling through the telephones "Now then, when is that St Maurice coming down?" "Five Anthonys with pigs wanted at once." And so on. The suggestion of humour is not unwelcome amidst the many painful sights.

All the more painful because Monsieur Pacheu —and he rather prides himself on it—strives to be as realistic as possible in his presentment of the martyrdoms.

I noticed a St Jean de Dieu succouring a leper, on whose body the modeller had not omitted one of the horrid signs of that most foul of maladies. I spoke to Monsieur Pacheu about it.

"We do a large export trade to South America," said he "and it is necessary that, to impress the imaginations of the people out there—who, as a rule, are quite indifferent to suffering—we should strike hard. Yet in none of our figures is truth surpassed. That leper was studied from life. The blotches and sores on his skin were copied from a corpse.

He went on to tell me that St Anthony of Padua was most in demand at that time. "Decidedly at the top of the tree. Holds the cord, as one may say. He is, you know, the saint of temporal things. He is invoked in times of shipwreck: he grants assistance; people who have lost anything—a purse for instance—apply to him for his aid. It is usual now to place his statue on a wooden pedestal, in which are two slits, one large and one small. Those slits communicate with two receptacles. Of these one is intended to receive letters addressed to the saint by suppliants, the other is for such money offerings as they choose to make. The letters are all burned without being opened, for in this way the messages reach their destination."

I asked Monsieur Pacheu what other saints had enjoyed popularity with the faithful.

"I remember," he said, "when there was a great rush on the figure of St Expedite, who is the patron saint of suitors who are in a hurry, as of all people who wish something to be carried out with expedition. There was a time when we were sending out statues of Notre Dame de Lourdes by the waggon-load. St Jude was also once in great favour. He is the saint who is invoked in desperate causes. But I cannot remember any vogue such as that enjoyed at present by St Anthony of Padua. He is, you see, the patron saint of worldly people, of society. He himself was a man of noble birth. The blessed Mary-Marguerite was in very great demand about twenty-five years ago. St Benedict, the negro, has had his day also, as well as many others whose popularity has since waned."

I learned that the composition of the figures is a material called *carton romain*, a mixture of plaster of Paris, dextrine, tow, and other materials, and when set has the hardness of stone. "You could bang that St Joseph on the head with a hammer," said to me a workman, "but you could not hurt him."

Saints in this workshop are made in heights varying from three inches to nine feet, though often much larger statues are executed. A Virgin was made for a church in Connecticut, which was over thirty feet high. The prices range from twopence halfpenny to hundreds of pounds. A "Chemin de Croix" had been invoiced at £6000.

When the figures have been moulded they are dried in a specially constructed oven.

I do not remember to have seen anything more picturesque in any industry than when Monsieur Pacheu threw open the heavy doors of the drying oven in his factory.

In the deep gloom of this cavern the white figures of many saints stood out refulgent. There were here sombre suggestions of the grave, of the deep night of the lower world, yet also of that victory over death, of that promise of victory which can never impress themselves more vividly than in the midst of this army of martyrs.

After the figure has been dried it is taken to the modelling room, where all imperfections of the moulding are removed by skilful artisans. Here the file is at work. It is also here that the eyes are fitted into the face. For this purpose the back of the head is removed. The eyes are of glass, and are made by the same manufacturers who make artificial eyes for men and women. The making of glass eyes for statues of saints is an important branch of the *oculariste's* industry. When the eyes have been inserted and the wings and various attributes have been added and fixed to the statue, it is taken into the painting-room to be decorated. This is the last stage of the manufacture. In another part of the building we saw the *marcoteurs* at work. These are artists who, when a special order for some figure who is not a "current line" comes in, deftly transform one saint into another. This is done by changing the attributes. By removing the beard of one statue an elderly bishop can be transformed into a young saint. It is an important part of the industry, for, as Monsieur Pacheu pointed out, "There are more than 40,000 different saints in the calendar and it is quite impossible to construct models of them all."

In a conversation with Monsieur Pacheu there are humorous anecdotes to be gleaned here and there.

"A few weeks ago," he told me, "a man came and ordered a St Anthony, but not the one of Padua, the St Anthony with the pig. When we delivered the saint he refused to accept it. 'I want a very much larger pig,' he said, '*un cochon enorme*' (an enormous pig). It appeared that the man was a pork butcher—St Anthony, you know, is the patron saint of pork butchers—and that he wanted the statue to put in the shop-window as the sign of his trade. We told him that we did not work for that kind of thing. I remember also that a wineshop keeper wanted us to make him a St Eloy with an anvil. St Eloy was to be fitted with some mechanism by which he could be made to beat the drum on the anvil. People have a curious idea as to what we can and cannot do."

Since the canonisation of Joan of Arc, Monsieur Pacheu has been inundated with orders for her statue.

The trade, by the way, in Joan of Arc articles has always been very great in France. There are scores of factories doing nothing else but turning out Joan of Arc statues, pictures, chromos and printed matter about her.

The impressions to be gathered in the house of a maker of saints are many, and for the most part elevated. I do not think, however, that any one is more striking than that which comes upon you as you visit the store-room of such a factory. I remember visiting the one belonging to Monsieur Pacheu's works. My visit happened towards the fall of day. Shadows filled the large hall, all peopled with the images of saints and martyrs, glorious in the immaculate white of their forms. There was a great sense of peace and quiet. As the gloom deepened, the figures seemed to stand out more refulgent. White hands writhed aloft in agony, but here and there also were fingers raised, these in prayer, these in benediction. And for all that one told oneself that this was but a merchant's store-room, that these were but images of stone and wood and plaster, there was here a symbol, a symbol which haunted one for hours

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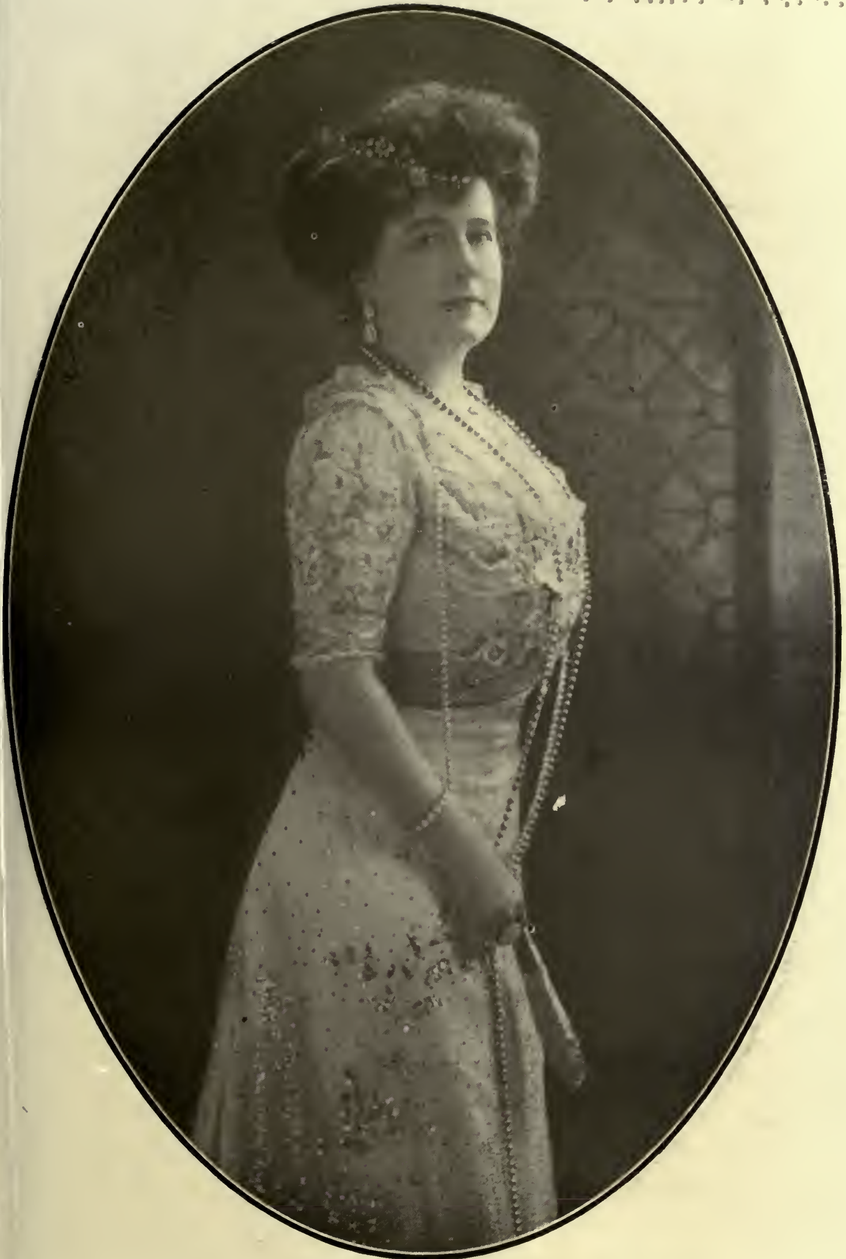

IRENE OSGOOD
(Mrs. Robert Harborough Sherard),
Authoress of "To a Nun Confess'd," "Servitude," etc.

o face page 224.

afterwards outside in the busy world, in the glare and rattle of the town.

Apropos of hair, it is characteristic of the French public, more humane and tolerant than the English, that men who for reasons best known to themselves allow their hair to grow far beyond regulation length may walk abroad in the streets of Paris without exciting comment or ridicule. "'Tis an artist," would be the remark passed, if any, should certain men of letters, of England, display on the boulevards those untidy and abundant chevelures which irritate the London gamins.

I remember walking out once with a very distinguished writer whose home is in one of the adjacent islands, and during the whole of our walk —at that time the island was full of trippers—we were pursued with cries of "There's 'air!" "No wonder the barbers have 'ad to go for soldiers!" "Git yer 'air cut!" and so forth. It was very irritating, though I must say that my friend seemed to enjoy it, as evidences of popularity.

The most hirsute person I ever knew in the literary world of Paris was the notorious Sâr Peladan. His head was surmounted with a tangled jungle. When he was forced to join the army he protested most vigorously against the shears of the regimental barber. He invoked the special divinities under which he affected to place his destinies, and, in the courtyard of the barracks, made a loud appeal to the sun to resent such an outrage by veiling its face. Nothing of the kind happened, and the unsympathetic non-com. who presided over the barber's party kept repeating, "'Tis fine, 'tis grand, but it has all got to come off.

It has all got to come off." And it all did come off, making Sâr Peladan look much cleaner and fresher.

The longer I live in France the more I am convinced that the forced military service is an excellent thing for young men. I remember once receiving the visit of a very smart young soldier up in town on leave from a garrison town in the east of France. When he was shown into my study, I imagined there must have been some mistake, as I failed to recognise him. It was only when he mentioned his name that I realised who this bright, trim, joyous youth was. When I last saw him it was at a literary *café* in the Latin Quarter, and a more miserable-looking object I never remember having set eyes on. His hair was long and matted; his face was sallow with nightly walks, and his conversation as dismal as his appearance. He was a decadent poet of considerable merit, but, although only twenty years of age, was *blasé* about everything. I found him changed as much morally as physically. The army had taken all the nonsense out of him, and he was as full of life and hope and faith in the future as I could wish to see a young man. I cannot help thinking that a year or two of forced military service would do our English youths a sight of good. One is always more or less of an ass at twenty, and some hard work, discipline and privation are the best cures for nonsense and conceit. Send Bunthorne or Postlethwaite *au régiment* for a year or two; let an unromantic corporal and a practical sergeant "deal with" him, and he will return an infinitely more useful and agreeable member of society.

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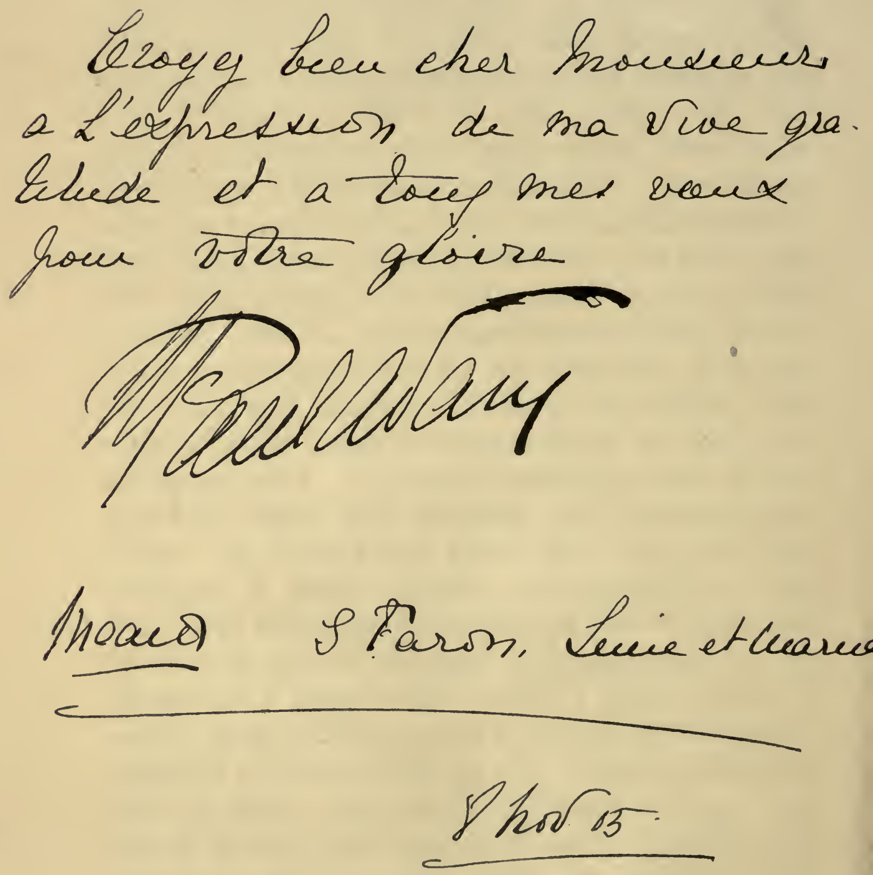

Croyez bien cher Monsieur
a l'expression de ma vive gra-
titude et a tous mes voeux
pour votre gloire

Paul Adam

Moard S. Faron, Seine et Mar

8 nov 15

FACSIMILE OF PAUL ADAM'S WRITING FROM A LETTER TO THE AUTHOR.

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Apropos of the transformation of poets, I remember one who knew how to make his muse pay him handsomely. This was Mr Jean Rameau, who, after leading a Bohemian life, frequenting the Chat Noir and similar haunts for some years, blossomed out into a society entertainer, and was to be seen at most of the grand *soirées* in Parisian society, reciting choice selections from his work, being treated precisely the same in the way of remuneration as the comic singers, jugglers and monologuists engaged at the same *soirée* to help out the evening. The cheque was invariably a handsome one, each such evening being worth from eight to twenty guineas to the practical young poet. I heard bitter things said about Jean Rameau by fellow-poets on this account, notably from one old Academician and poet, who said it was *dégoûtant.* For myself I thought it smart of Rameau. In his case no doubt the long hair and wild appearance helped him in his business. They were part of his stock in trade, just as they are of more than one English writer who occurs to one's memory.

Amongst my literary friends in Paris, Daudet perhaps wore his hair the longest, and it suited him well, and de Goncourt took full advantage of the universal custom which allows old men to show all the hair that time has left to them. Zola had an almost military clip, and so had de Maupassant, who wore his hair *à la* Bressan, a style very popular with French officers. Both Maurice Barrés and Pierre Louÿs affect the coiffures of 1848, which gives a romantic touch to their appearance. Paul Adam is modern.

I will make the confession here that at one time I also, *moi qui vous parle,* did fancy myself mightily with Samsonian locks. My theory was that the man who is an artist should distinguish himself from the *bourgeois* by some outward sign and token. No doubt the real reason was juvenile love of pose, as in the cases of so many other men of letters.

It was Irene Osgood who promptly disposed of my superabundant chevelure. "It looks very nice, I admit," she said, "but you had better go down to the hotel coiffeur and have it all cut down. You would look ever so much better."

This was at the Hotel Gallia in Cannes, where after many years I had met again, as a widow, the girl whom I had so often admired in Paris, now as a child dashing on horseback, with ruddy locks flying out behind her, down the Avenue des Acacias, later as the lonely little wife of a great American millionaire, ever absent *pour affaires,* living in golden isolation in one of the palaces of Paris.

"Of course, if you think so," I said dubiously.

"I certainly do think so," said Irene Osgood.

"Very well, then, that settles it," I rejoined, and five minutes later the hotel coiffeur had settled my coiffure for good and all.

A very distinguished writer who wears his hair, or what there is left of it, *â la* 1848 is Edmond Rostand, the author of *Cyrano de Bergerac.* I have a good deal to say about him in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XIII

Edmond Rostand—His Home in the Rue Alphonse de Neuville—De Rubempré *redivivus*—Early Successes—*Le Gant Rouge, Les Pierrots*—*Les Musardises*—A Reading at the Comédie Française—Refused—*Les Romanesques*—Monsieur Claretie's Keys—*Reçu, a Correction*—Too long—How Rostand works—His "enormous Weakness" for Shakespeare—*La Princesse Lointaine* — A First Night at the Français—"Ca y est"—Rostand and William Archer—*Folie de la Persecution*—A Sonnet to Sarah—*La Samaritaine*—*Cyrano de Bergerac*—No Cyrano but Coquelin—Sarah and the Duc de Reichstadt—Rostand's Love of Solitude—The Coquelins

ONE would like to be able to number Edmond Rostand amongst one's friends the French, but I should say the number of men who can claim that distinction must be very small indeed. Rostand is not what the French call *liant.* He avoids people, he has the neurasthenic horror of social relations, and with wide human sympathies he ranks almost as a misanthrope.

"I rarely ever go out," he once said to me, describing his life; "I never take any exercise, I never go out for the mere sake of walking, only when I have a definite object in view. I dislike meeting people. I hardly ever see anybody—my wife and children suffice me for company—and I have only one or two friends; Le Bargy of the Comédie Française is a good friend of mine, and there are one or two more, and those are all the people I ever see. I never receive. My doors are closed to strangers." Under these circumstances I have always felt rather pleased to be the only person to whom Rostand has ever spoken of his literary career. It was not very long after his big success with *Cyrano*, and whilst he was writing *L'Aiglon*, that I secured an introduction to him and was duly received. And that introduction was procured not through any literary or theatrical people, but through a bank-manager. Rostand's father is connected—or was at that time—with the Comptoir d'Escompte, and it was thanks to one of the officials of this bank that I gained access to the wonderful recluse of the Rue Alphonse de Neuville. The only condition which he placed on receiving me was that no attempt should be made to discuss the Affaire Dreyfus—which, he said, bored him unspeakably. I had no wish to discuss Dreyfus, for my object in desiring to know Rostand was to convince myself of the falsity of many stories I had heard of him and to gather from his own lips the true account of how he had fought his way to the front. After our long conversation, and as I was leaving him, he told me that he had never spoken of his career to anyone before me, and hoped that if I published what he had said (which I have not done till this day) it would be taken as the *ne varietur* account of his literary life.

Nowadays, wishing to put as great a distance between himself and the turmoil of Paris as possible, Edmond Rostand lives most of the year at his country seat at Arnaga, near Cambo, in the Basses Pyrenées, as that part of France is called. It is a romantic country, a land of cape and sword, a land of pretty women and heady wines, the very habitat for the last of the *romantiques*. Rostand lives there and George Gissing died there, than

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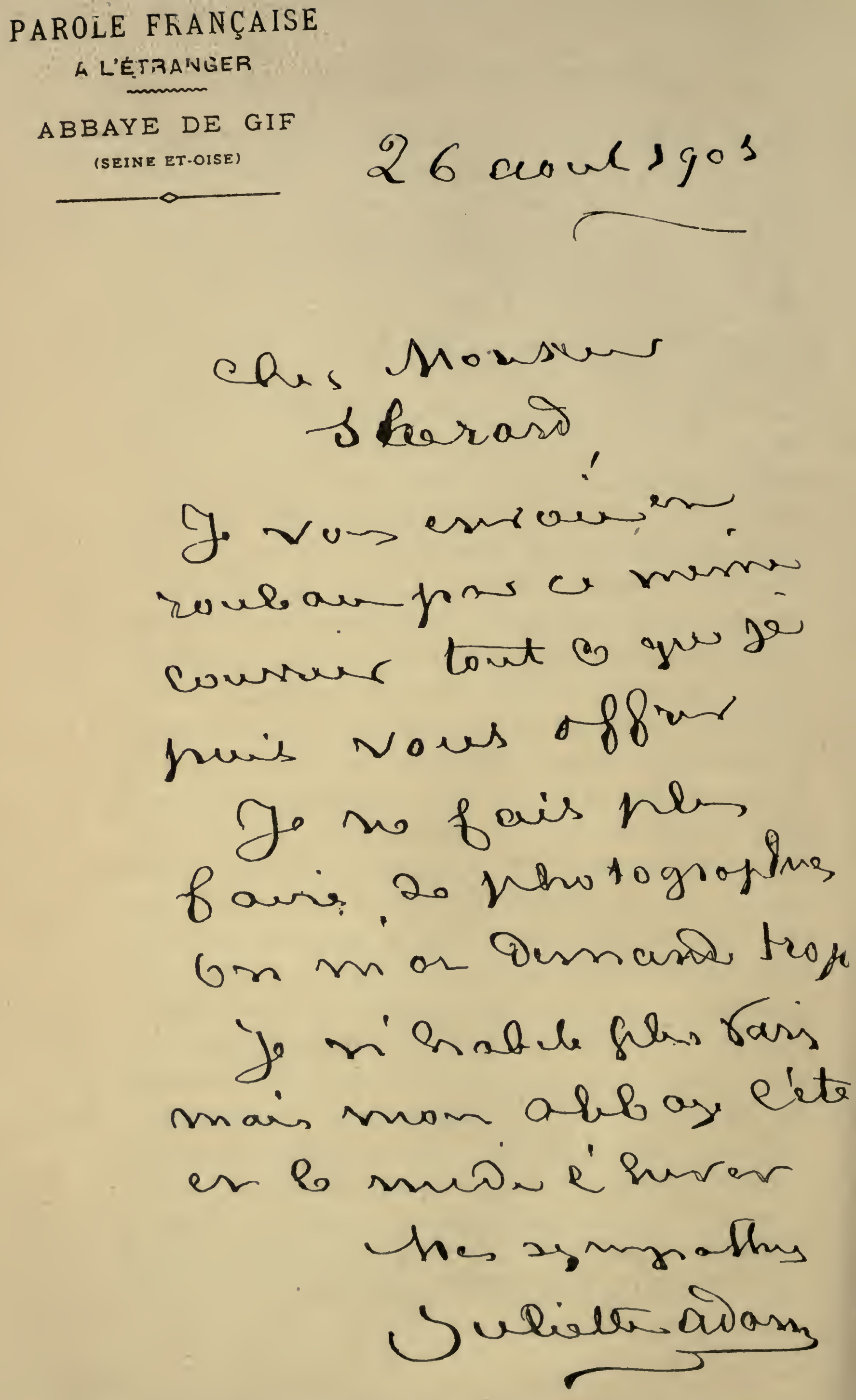

PAROLE FRANÇAISE
A L'ÉTRANGER

ABBAYE DE GIF
(SEINE ET-OISE)

26 août 1903

Cher Monsieur
Sherard !

Je vous envoie en
rouleau par ce même
courrier tout ce que je
puis vous offrir

Je ne fais plus
faire de photographies
on m'en demande trop

Je n'habite plus Paris
mais mon abbaye l'été
et le midi l'hiver

Mes sympathies
Juliette Adam

FACSIMILE OF A LETTER FROM MADAME JULIETTE ADAM, FORMERLY EDITRESS OF "LA NOUVELLE REVUE."

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which I could wish no better epigrammatic description of this district. It was at Bayonne that Napoleon trapped the foolish King of Spain; it was through the gates of Bayonne that Wellington made his first triumphal march into France. But one doubts if ever Rostand comes to town, though perhaps in the winter the bull-fights at the Bayonne arena may attract him on account of the extraordinary types of swashbucklering swordsmen whom the *corridas* attract, while perhaps once in a while the *chic* of the neighbouring Biarritz may draw him to the contemplation of the elegancies and luxuries of the world which he has abandoned.

There must be something about the life in Paris which exhausts people and not only the neurasthenic. My excellent friend Madame Juliette Adam, formerly editress of *La Nouvelle Revue*, who created Paul Bourget and Pierre Loti, amongst other writers, and who did me the honour of writing a page review of one of my books in *Le Petit Marseillais*, abandoned her delightful house in the Rue Juliette Lamber (called after her), and went to live in the country. I find a note from her amongst my papers. I had asked her for a photograph, and she says, "I do not have any more of my photographs taken. People ask me for too many of them." And she adds, "I don't live in Paris any more, but reside at my abbey in the summer and go to the South in the winter."

On the occasion on which I conversed with Rostand, he had only recently moved into the house he had bought in the Rue Alphonse de Neuville, a street in the ultimate regions of Paris, the name of which was so unfamiliar to the driver who took me there that he kept consulting his little pocket street-register. I expect it was the loneliness of the place which attracted the poet. It leads only to the outer wall and is a street where no man passes. Opposite the house was a *terrain vague* and near it a railway bridge.

Rostand's nerves were at that time so highly strung that any loud noise or strong light gave him real and keen suffering. All the heavy silk curtains of the windows which looked out upon the street were drawn. The first impression that one received on entering the house was one of shade ; the second was one of silence.

Then came the impression that this was the House Beautiful. The entrance hall was hung with rare tapestries. The pictures of some Italian masters hung upon the walls and gave sunlight whence it was excluded. Chairs in the Renaissance style, symmetrically arranged, stood against the walls. On a table in the centre a plateau of rare Delft ware yawned for cards, but received very few, for Rostand received very rarely. "I have only one or two friends," he said.

The drawing-room where I first met the author of *Cyrano de Bergerac* was a brighter, more cheerful room, for the white silk of the curtains could not altogether shut out the bright sun. The furniture was in the cheerful Louis XVI. style. The walls were hung with faded rose-leaf silk, and upon them were one or two pictures. I remember a Miller which reminded me of Madame Roland. Bric-à-brac everywhere, a busy Louis XV. clock upon the mantelpiece, ticking so fast, as if it were trying to catch up with the period of the furniture.

In one corner was the tiniest of writing tables, elegantly laid out, not the bench of a literary workman—like poor Zola's—but the dainty escritoire of the *dilettante* of letters.

There is no portrait of Rostand which I have ever seen which gave him as he appeared to me. The one that has made the author of *Cyrano* familiar to the world shows him as he was at twenty. Now, though all the old elegancies are there, it is a man more harassed that one sees. Neurasthenia has continued its work. The forehead is loftier than ever, the features are more pinched, wrinkles have appeared. "Sem" in his caricatures has come closest to the real Rostand as his nerve-malady has made him.

For the rest, then as now, a dandy, a de Rubempré, one to whom all the little details of the toilet (as they are to all true artists) are of importance. On the day on which I saw him Rostand was wearing a black morning suit striped vertically with a tiny stripe of white, a cream-coloured silk shirt, red at the cuffs, which were turned back, and at the collar, which was turned down, a black cravat, resembling a stock, such as used to be worn in France in 1830, and has been revived often since. His socks were silk, spangled with tiny yellow flowerets, and he wore tiny slippers of patent leather. On the fingers there was just enough gold to suggest jewellery. These were the elegancies of the Parisian dandy of the twenty-eighth year of the Third Republic—the dandy, Rostand.

A cigarette, rolled by himself, always between his fingers. A nervous, tired, haggard, anxious air, at all times. The shy look of the man who is self-centred—or rather always preoccupied. A soft, low voice which in its rare moments rises rich and full, eloquent above others. This dramatist has no gestures. Only now and then there is a weary wave of the hand as the fine head lolls from one side of his Voltaire chair to the other. Manners which go better with the Louis XV. *cartel* than with the Louis XVI. furniture. In the sleepy eyes occasional flashes which show who there is behind this mask of extreme fatigue.

Rostand was thirty-one at the time I saw him. He had "got there" then. "I do not," he was able to say to me, "think that anything that the press—which has never been kind to me—may do in future will prevent the public from being curious about my work and coming to any theatre where my plays may be acted."

As a matter of fact, it was long before then that Rostand had had, as a dramatic poet, the full of his heart's desire, the desire of every Frenchman who affronts the perilous hazards of writing for the stage—the triumph and glory of being played on the national boards of the Comédie Française.

For a play which he wrote when he was twenty-three was played when he was twenty-six, and that is what can be said of few authors, unless it be our poor dead Daudet, who as a lad of twenty-two heard the Paris of the Théâtre Molière applaud his *Lily of France.*

"When I was quite a young man," so Edmond Rostand told me, "I wrote a play in one act. It was about *pierrots.* Was it called *Les Pierrots*, or *Le Pierrot*, or *Colombine*? I do not remember. All that I remember is that one night at an evening party, when there were many young ladies present, to amuse them I read them this little piece in verse. De Feraudy of the Comédie Française was there and heard me read it, and was most enthusiastic and said that it must be played at his theatre, and asked me to give him the manuscript and that he would lay it before Claretie, the director.

"I had written for the stage before then, a trifle for the Cluny Theatre, called *Le Gant Rouge.* I was twenty years old at the time. But there is nothing to be said about it except that it was the first realisation of a dream that always haunted me as a child, and that was, that I must write for the stage. And shall I tell you what it was that confirmed me in the thought that if I had any work to do in the world, it was in writing for the stage? The stray remark of a critic whom I do not know, whom I have never met. When, as a very young man, I published a volume of poems 'Les Musardises,' Gustave Filon — that is the name of the critic—reviewing it in *La Revue Bleue,* wrote that he saw in my poems a large promise of future success in writing poetry plays for the stage. At that time, though I had always wished to write for the stage, I had never thought, I had never ventured to think, of writing plays in verse. It seemed to me very curious, this remark of his, and later on I remembered it.

"I always wrote poetry. 'Les Musardises' cannot now be found, but I intend when I have time to republish it with other verses. I shall call the book 'First Efforts,' 'Les Premières' or something like that. 'Les Musardises' had no more success than have any of the first volumes of poetry of young men, and I wish to give it another life.

"My father was a poet, and I may say that my father had a very great influence on me. Eugène Rostand was the author of different volumes of verse, of which perhaps his 'Ebauches,' his 'Poesies Simples' and his translations of Catullus, which were rewarded by the Academy, are the best known.

"*Les Pierrots*—was that the title?—was my first attempt in writing for the stage in rhyme. I have told you that de Feraudy was enthusiastic about it and that he took the manuscript away from me and gave it to Claretie to read. Claretie said that it was delightful and that he would put it upon the stage at once if the Committee accepted it. So my play was first read by the 'reader' appointed by the Committee, M. de Courcelles, and he also approved, and at last one day I was invited to come and read it to the Committee. You know what that is, reading a play before the Committee of the Comédie Française. I was much too nervous to affront the ordeal in person, and so I asked Feraudy to read it for me. That was perhaps a mistake on my part, because a friend is always more anxious about another friend's work than he would be about his own, and as I can judge by after experiences I should not have been as nervous as he was. Feraudy did not defend himself. He succumbed to the opposition which he felt against me and the piece. The fact was that my play was read on the very day on which Theodore de Banville died. That threw a black veil over the reading. You see I was in some sort the poetic child of Banville. I seemed to be grasping ere yet his lips were cold for his inheritance, and the very subject of my piece—pierrots—was de Banville's own, his very own domain. Was he not the incarnate Pierrot by physique as much as by his creations, so that every line of my play seemed to recall to the actors that he was dead, and that, young man as I was, I was waiting to step into his shoes. Got the actor, who was de Banville's intimate friend, said afterwards that he could not bring himself to accept a piece which, while de Banville was lying dead, reminded him at every turn of de Banville when he was alive. And then the Pierrot fancy, which is now once more blossoming forth, was at that time worn threadbare. There was no originality in the fancy. People were sated with his delicate moods and whims. So my piece was refused, and I will say that afterwards I was very pleased that it had been refused. Claretie seemed much vexed when the Committee announced their decision, and when he brought me the verdict to his private room he added: 'Listen. You will lose nothing. Write another piece and I will undertake that it shall be accepted.' Then I grew bold and I said: 'If I write another piece it will be a play in three acts.' 'Try to do so,' said Claretie.

"So I set to work and I wrote *Les Romanesques*. It was all written in Paris, I think, in less than three months. I was twenty-two or twenty-three at the time. It was a light and airy piece, proceeding from Marivaux and under the influence of de Banville, a piece of sheer badinage. This time I read it myself to the Committee. I trembled as I entered the room. But as soon as I reached the third line I was once again completely master of myself. I forgot my public. I forgot that Got was there, and Febvre and all the rest. I thought only of my piece, and I read on for myself alone. When I had finished reading I did what one always does on these occasions, I bowed to the Committee and I retired to M. Claretie's room to await their verdict. I never expected that they would accept it. That seemed too great a favour of fortune. I was so young, and to be played at the Comédie! Then came the jingling of Claretie's keys. M. Claretie, you know, has a big bunch of keys, and they jingle in his pocket as he walks along. As this jingling came nearer and nearer, I felt like a youth does at a French public school when he is waiting in the provisor's study to hear if he has passed his examination for the degree of Bachelor of Arts. The director came to inform me that my piece was accepted 'subject to correction.' That means that the Committee accepts your play on the condition that you make various alterations. It is a verdict which is generally tantamount to a polite refusal. Now I had no wish for a polite refusal. I did not want the papers next day to say that I had read a play to the Committee of the Comédie Française which had been politely declined. So I begged Claretie to go back and to ask the Committee, as they evidently would not have my *Romanesques,* to say so, to refuse it outright. One likes a decisive answer. Presently Claretie returned and said: 'What the Committee said is just what they mean, and so they beg me to inform you. They have accepted your piece and it will be played, only you must make a certain number of corrections. Or rather you must cut it down. It seems to them too long, and they think that it is rather too slight to fill a whole evening.'

"I took my piece home, and before the next reading I cut out about ten lines. But this time I read it with my watch on the table, and read it faster, so that it should not seem so long to them. It was accepted. During rehearsal I added about fifty fresh lines, some of which, I think, made for its good. Thus it was longer when it was played than when it was refused as being too long."

And here Rostand, rousing himself from his weary attitude in the Louis XVI. armchair, and brisk with the flow of his own vivacious words, rose and walked about the room, halting now and then to draw a whiff from his perfumed cigarette, a man altogether changed, enlivened, vigorous. Then settling himself astride a gilded chair with his arms crossed upon the back he went on to say:

"Then came three years of waiting, during which I had no news whatever of my piece. That is to say no good news, for I did occasionally hear of it from friends and from actors at the Français, who told me that it was not a good play and advised me to withdraw it. During the last year I was so tired of it all that I gave up hoping, and decided to write another play. In the meanwhile if I wrote little I burned much.

"I am very severe on myself and have destroyed far more than I have published. When I have written something I put it away in a drawer. Later when it comes under my hand by hazard I judge it, and if it is lacking in anything it is thrown into the fire.

"I have no method in my work, no regularity. That depends on my state of health, and I am never very well. There are times when such neurasthenia comes upon me that for weeks and months together I never leave my room. So there are long, long periods when I write nothing. When I do write it is usually in the evenings. At present I am writing in my dressing-room, for it is not long since I moved into this house, which I only bought recently. It was a wonderful bargain. It was built by a rich newspaper owner who failed, and it was sold by order of the court. I happened to be passing a day or two before the sale, and saw the house and liked it, and so came to the auction. I made one bid and there were no others, and I had it, so to speak, for a 'piece of bread.' The interest on the money which I paid for it is very much less in the way of rent than what I used to pay for a small apartment. When the men have finished with it it will be very comfortable. There is a fine large hall here. Come, it is worth looking at."

And with these words Rostand, rising from the gilded chair, passed out of the drawing-room and through an antechamber into another room, from which a short flight of broad oak steps led into a long, raftered oak-panelled hall. At the far end is a gallery, reached by a winding staircase at one corner. A huge white marble sculptured mantelpiece is on one side. The ceiling is heavy with oak rafters. "I wish it were white, all white," said Rostand; "I love white."

"When the men have finished," he added, pointing towards a medley array of ladders, "my workroom will be in a little room which opens on to that gallery."

It is a typical room, which sets one thinking, for what reason one does not know, of Shakespeare, at the mention of whose name Rostand springs to attention and says: "I love Shakespeare. I am always with Shakespeare. I have an 'enormous weakness' for Shakespeare."

From which to speak of his favourite authors, laying particular stress as one would expect on Hugo and Lamartine. "Poe, I liked him fairly well but it is years since I read him. Of foreign authors—perhaps an Englishman will smile at my confession—I am impassioned for Dickens. I have often thought that I should like to be the Dickens of the French stage, to give such infinity of details, to present so wonderful a mixture of what is pathetic with what is humorous.

"During the last year of the three years," he continued as we returned to the drawing-room, "in which the manuscript of my play *Les Romanesques* slept in the cardboard boxes of the French theatre I began to work on my play *La Princesse Lointaine*. Whilst I was so engaged, I heard that *Les Romanesques* was to be put on rehearsal. During the three days which preceded the first rehearsal, at which the author has to read his piece to the cast, having been told again, and more emphatically than ever, that the play was a bad one, I worked day and night on the manuscript, and what I did then, I think, improved the piece. I read it to the actors. It was an enormous success. Mademoiselle Reichemberg, who played the part of Sylvette, was especially delighted. Indeed from first to last her confidence in the success of the piece as money-producing never wavered. Which shows I think once more that women have a particular instinct for business, superior to men. For the men at the Comédie thought that the piece was foredoomed, and one of the actors who was chosen to play a leading rôle had refused his part and had sent a comrade to take his place.

"I should add that after the reading he made haste to take the part back again. The rehearsals lasted a month, and after the first fortnight the enthusiasm of the actors died out and they again began to say that the play was a certain failure. Le Bargy, however, and Mademoiselle Reichemberg, stuck up for it. One of the actors believed in it so little that, as he was dressing to go on, on the first night, he remarked that he was certain that the public would not allow the piece to be played to the end. I have a most pleasant remembrance of that first night. There was one of those sensations which one never experiences but once in life. I was seated in Claretie's box, which is on the second tier. It is usual for a dramatic author to sit with the manager on the first night on which his play is performed. When the curtain rose I was icy with despair. I felt certain that my play would be a failure, that it was presumptuous at my age to hope for a success on the first stage in the world. But when Le Bargy came to the fourth line, *Vois*, *le bord des vapeurs légères se dentelle*—Romeo's 'Look, love, what envious streaks do lace the severing clouds in yonder east'—there was a thunder of applause. I passed from despair to joy. Reichemberg was marvellous throughout, and the first act was a great success. Claretie, however, would not pronounce any opinion until the second act had been played. In the middle of that act there was a scene which, it was feared, might be found tedious by the public and that was the rock on which the piece might come to shipwreck. However the public found the scene not tedious but amusing, and laughed and applauded. Then Claretie said: '*Ça y est*' (It's all right). Then I experienced a feeling of pleasure greater than I have ever felt since, even after the wonderful first night of *Cyrano*. For remember that I had been very downhearted.

"Encouraged by the success of *Les Romanesques* I finished *La Princesse Lointaine.* Indeed on the morrow of that wonderful first night at the Française I read the first act to Sarah Bernhardt. I remember that she was just about to start on one of her tours, and that as I read my play she was sitting on a huge trunk in the midst of wild disorder. It was played the following April and was a wonderful success on the first night. I firmly believed that it would be a success. But the critics were not favourable. I had been classed since *Les Romanesques* as a comic author, ticketed as such—for in France every man is classed and ticketed and is not allowed to play more parts than one—and it had been expected that *La Princesse Lointaine* would be also in a vein of humour. When the critics found that it was a poem, mystical to some extent, they expressed disappointment. At that time the press could influence the public as to my work. I feel very sure that it could not do so now. The public also was disappointed. It was surprised that the play was not a merry one. Sarcey had written of me as a modern Regnard, and Regnard, critics and public wished me to remain throughout my whole career. The failure of *La Princesse Lointaine* discouraged me. I felt that I was doomed to be comic or not to be at all as a playwright. I revolted against this tyranny and I said to myself: 'I must set to work to get the right not to be comic when it does not suit me to be so.' I determined to write a religious play and that is how *La Samaritaine* came to be written. To say one word more about the critics and *La Princesse Lointaine*. There was one article which gave me immense pleasure. This was written by William Archer, of London. Sarcey had said that my play was not clear, that there was in it much that one could not understand, and Archer answered Sarcey just as I should have done if I had written the article. It gave me great pleasure and no little encouragement.

"The press felt, after a while, that it had been too severe and repented towards me, and when that *fête* was organised at the Renaissance in honour of Sarah Bernhardt the high honour was done me that I was chosen amongst the five poets who recited verses in her praise on the stage. The great success of that sonnet gave me fresh heart. For before then I had been plunged in the most sombre melancholy. I fancied myself hated by all men, the butt of every tongue, and for five long months I had never left my room, a victim to sheer *folie de la persecution.* Nothing interested me. I did nothing. I wanted nothing, only to be left alone to my imagined disgrace, to hear no sounds, to see no faces. Such fits come upon me now and again. So strong was this madness of mine—in thinking that everybody hated and despised me—that it was with fear and trembling that I stepped upon the stage to recite my sonnet in praise of Sarah. I was so astonished to see that nobody hissed me, that I was not pointed at! I was more astonished and delighted than I can well express at the enthusiastic reception which was awarded to my verse. This cured me of my melancholy, and to give me still more heart came my success with my verses on behalf of Greece, which were published in the *Echo de Paris.* After they appeared I became the hero of the Greek colony here, and was *fêted* and flattered in a way sufficient to restore all the self-confidence which I had lost. The girls of Athens sent me a letter which was signed by every one of them, and in the letter was a violet picked in Athens. You can hardly believe how pretty it was.

"Then came the success of *La Samaritaine.* I only allowed it to be played during Holy Week and, though the prices of the seats were raised, it earned, relatively speaking, more money than even *Cyrano* does. But what afforded me the most delight in its success was that I had shown the public and the critics, and had convinced myself, that I was not forced always to write comedies.

"All this time I had been carrying *Cyrano de Bergerac* in my head. Ever since I was at school, both as a pupil at Stanislas college, here in Paris, and during my three years in my native town of Marseilles, where I finished my career as a schoolboy, I had felt that there was a play to be written on the life of Cyrano de Bergerac, duellist, warrior and author. Even before *Les Romanesques* was written I had the intention of writing a play about him. But I had no action for the piece. I thought of him always and I read all that has been written about him, Bibliophile Jacob's book upon him, Nodier's eulogy and of course every line of his own works. I filled my head with historical notes concerning him. Now and then I would write a few verses, a tirade or two, and put them away in my drawers. So that when I had found the plot of the action in which he was to move, I had much of the play ready. I wrote *Cyrano* simultaneously with *Les Samaritaines*. When I was in the midst of the piece, it occurred to me that the only man in France who could play the part was Coquelin. *Cyrano* could not be played at the Français, for there was no one there who could act the part, or rather who could look the part, like Coquelin. I felt so convinced of this that I would not listen to my friend Feraudy when he urged me to give it to the Comédie Française. I had believed that it would take with the public but I had never dreamed that it would succeed as it has done. It is an unheard-of thing on the stage for a play written in rhyme to run for more than three hundred nights.

"Since then I have done nothing beyond writing a little of my new play *L'Aiglon,* which is to be played by Sarah Bernhardt as soon as her new theatre, the Théâtre des Nations, has been redecorated. She will open with it next season. She wanted to open with it immediately, but as I knew that the theatre is to be redecorated I said that I preferred to be played in a pretty theatre rather than in a dirty one.

"There is not a man whom I have ever seen who looks the part of the unhappy little Duc de Reichstadt as Sarah looks it. Do you know, she is the image of the lad. I have seen her in the wig and dress intended for the part, and all the grace, the languor, the effeminacy, the expression of morbid consciousness of being foredoomed, which characterised the features of the unhappy son of Napoleon and Marie-Louise are there. Over and over again people have asked me, 'Why give the part to a woman ?' and as often I have answered, 'I have more than one hundred and fifty portraits of the little duke and there is not a man living who could give his maladive grace.' I remember that in my room in Marseilles there was a portrait of the Duc de Reichstadt by Raffet, which is the picture of Sarah. Then as to her voice. The duke is dying of consumption, for the action of my play takes place during the last year of his short life, and so should it happen that her voice should tire during the last act, that will be all the better. The broken voice will add to the pathos and the truth of the scene."

Here interrupting the story of his work, Rostand, once more rising and walking about the room, began to talk of the little duke and pointed out all the pathos of the story of the child who was born heir to the greatest empire that ever was founded by man, in whose cradle there were twenty crowns and the heaviest sceptre swayed since, as Victor Hugo said, Charlemagne let his fall as too heavy even for his Titan hands, and who ended ere life had well begun, orphaned of the father whom he loved, lonely always, without having tasted one of the joys, though all the bitterness, of life. And we agreed that there was correlation between his story and that of that other duke, the Duc d'Enghien, and I asked if the story of Napoleon's victim had never tempted his dramatic pen. Rostand replied: "All the same pathos is in the story of the Duc de Reichstadt. Indeed more." And then he went on to speak of the morbid melancholies of the Hapsburgs, the consciousness of certain disaster which seems to weigh upon them at all times and in particular of that legacy of hysteria which Marie Louise bequeathed to her children, not alone to Napoleon's offspring but to the children of her second husband, her consort in the duchy of Parma.

Uninterrupted, Rostand can talk with all the vivacity of a Meridional, though with the grace and style of the cultured Parisian. As he talks he animates himself and the face becomes transfigured. But if at any time this flow of conversation is interrupted all the animation dies out, the expression of fatigue returns and it becomes necessary for him once more to launch himself upon a stream of ideas before one can again see him as he is beneath the pale mask of the tired dandy.

He lives for the treasures which fill his beautiful house, for the treasures which fill his shelves, and for the treasures which fill his mind. "I rarely ever go out," he said. "I never take any exercise. I never go out for the mere sake of walking, only when I have a definite object in view. I am told that I ought to take exercise and I think that I shall begin fencing once more. I hardly ever see anybody—my wife and children suffice me for company—and I have only one or two friends, Le Bargy of the Français is a good friend of mine and there are one or two more, and those are all the people I ever see. I never receive. My doors are closed to strangers. I wish to be alone. I am quite without the pale of the Paris world of letters, I belong to no school or literary coterie and I have never written in any of the magazines in which those coteries defend their special views on art. I do not know what is said of me amongst my brother authors and"—he waved his cigarette wearily—"I was overjoyed that when I read my sonnet at the Renaissance, I was not hissed, for I had fancied that my having kept aloof from all literary society might have been interpreted into disdain, whereas it is merely that I am so nervous that I cannot mix with people, that I must be alone."

One wonders how *Cyrano* will fare now that Coquelin is no more. But alas! I suppose that here also we shall find that no man is indispensable in this world. Some other actor will arise who will make us forgot the Cyrano of Coquelin. That is the sad thing about actors. To them that small change of immortality which is posthumous fame is denied. They leave nothing behind but a name, a memory which gradually fades into nothing. For them there is no monument more lasting than bronze, their works die with them.

Coquelin's death, as also that of his gifted brother, was a great blow for Paris. They were integral parts of the Tout-Paris. Though I knew them both well, and with the rest of the playgoing world was bound to admit the superior genius of the elder brother, it was the death of Ernest Cadet, as we called him, which affected me most. Cadet had less talent but the better heart. It was he who tended the old mother, the old Boulonnaise peasant woman, and in his dealings with men he showed the greater altruism. And of course the more selfish brother prospered the most. For the rest Cadet's death was a relief to him, and to his friends a deliverance from sorrow and anxiety. An unhappy love affair, and the loss of most of his laboriously amassed fortune in speculations, had unhinged poor Cadet's mind. It was a mere coincidence, by the way, that his death followed so closely on his brother's, and there was in this chronological sequence of events none of the "pathos" which the newspaper reporters endeavoured to see in it—Cadet did not even know that Constant had died.

Cadet was a very old friend of mine and it had been agreed between us that "one of these days" I was to go and have lunch with him. "Vous avec moi," he had said. He had lunched and dined several times with me, but the opportunity had never offered itself to him to entertain me. It was a joke between us, this *déjeuner* that I was to have at his expense. On the rare occasions on which we met we used to refer to it, and decided always that "one of these days" that *déjeuner* must take place. And now, like that dinner to which Daudet had invited me a few days before his sudden death, this luncheon is one of those feasts which will never be held in this world.

CHAPTER XIV

The Barber and Monsieur Barrés—Both Academicians—The Violet Ribbon—How it is distributed—The Dessert at a Foyot Déjeuner—Rostand at the Academy—Why he left Paris—"Oh! Oh! C'est une Imperatrice"—Fauteuil 13—Rostand's Costume—A Byronic Touch—Rostand's Muse—Toujours Sarah Bernhardt—A Literary Masterpiece—Rostand's Histrionics—M. de Vogüé's Tribute—Those who were Missing—Jules Verne—Tears and Kisses—Catulle Mendés—Saint Germain-en-Laye—An old Retainer—Ernest Dowson and the Yellow Butterfly—The Castle, the *Concierge*, and the Cats

"BARRÉS an Academician! Why, I thought he was that long ago. Tiens, tiens! Only nominated a few days ago. And I, who had such a very high opinion of his talents! Why, monsieur, I, I who am speaking to you, I have been an officer of the Academy for the last five years."

Thus a barber the other day. The good man's mistake was a very common one. In the lower middle classes in France people do not know the distinction between being a member of the French Academy and being decorated with the *palmes académiques*, or violet ribbon, which entitles a man or a woman to call him or herself *officier d'Académie.*

If there is not much difficulty in prophesying when you are quite sure, so also there should be no credit taken when the prophecy comes true. So I am asking for no laurels for having predicted in my "Twenty Years in Paris," not only that Monsieur Fallières would be the next President of the French Republic, but that Maurice Barrés was

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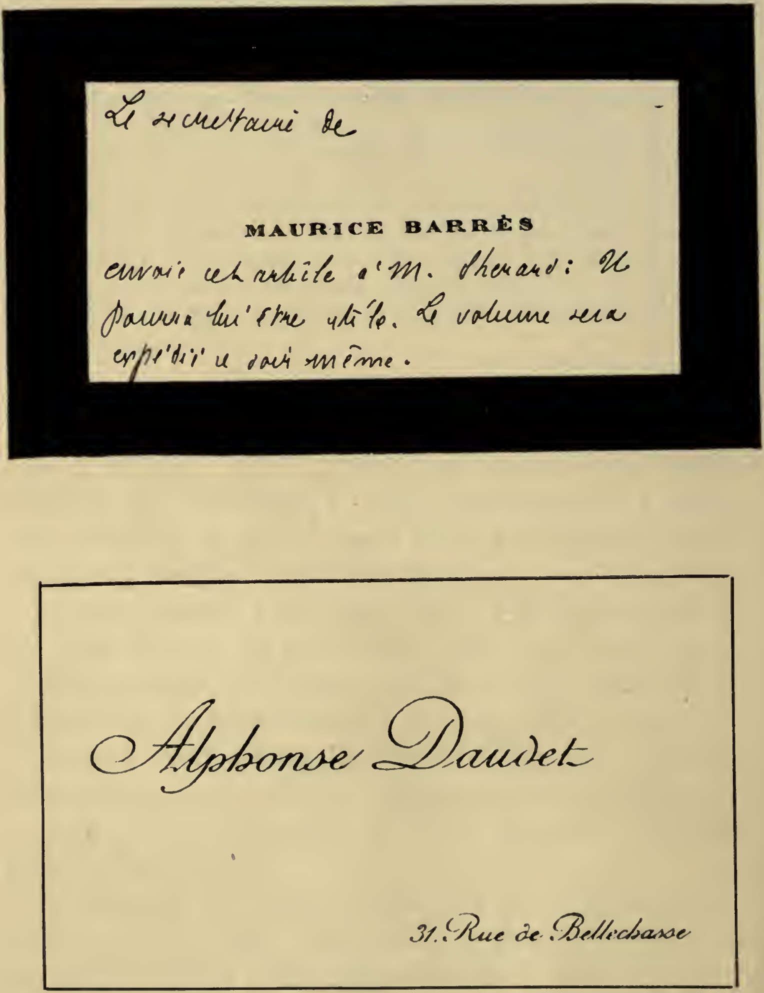

Le secrétaire de

MAURICE BARRÈS

envoie cet article à M. Sherard: il pourra lui être utile. Le volume sera expédié ce soir même.

Alphonse Daudet

31. Rue de Bellechasse

TWO VISITING-CARDS FROM FRENCH AUTHORS.

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on the high road to the Academy. He was the most académisable man that I knew. He wrote well, without offence, his republicanism was agreeably tinged with royalism, such as would appeal to the "party of the dukes," and he always dressed and bore himself like a man of the world. There were three young writers in Paris whom I had noted as future Academicians—Barrés, Henri de Régnier and Pierre Louÿs. The first has got there all right; in the case of the other two it is only a question of time Barrés has done some very good work, but perhaps his best work has been journalistic. One still remembers the article he wrote called "Their Faces," when it became known that the list of deputies who had accepted bribes from the Panama Company was in the hands of the authorities; a most striking and graphic picture of the conscience-stricken and quailing men whom one could observe in the Chamber of Deputies. But it is his mundane qualities rather than his writings which have landed Barrés in the Academy. He has always conducted his existence on high-toned principles. He has never been a Bohemian; he has scrupulously avoided Montmartre and the Quartier Latin; he has visited his hairdresser every day, and even when he was not very busy he used to answer letters through "the secretary of M. Barrés."

All this has been sensible and a good business investment. It pays splendidly for a French literary man to get into the Academy. His literary goods bearing the stamp of that lofty assembly sell very much better than before and, of course, there are all kinds of perquisites which have a direct cash value connected with the post. Barrés' enemies are saying that the best men never do get into the Academy, that Balzac, Dumas *père* and Zola were excluded—to mention only three names. That is quite true, and it is true also, what is not generally known, that the great poet Charles Baudelaire was excluded on the ground mainly that he was "too original" in his writings, and that originality, being *outré*, was not wanted in that august company. This was what Villemain remarked to the poet when Baudelaire was paying him the usual formal canvassing visit. "I have never had any originality," said Villemain. To which Baudelaire answered, "How do you know that?" One has quite forgotten Villemain and all about him except that he was an Academician and at one time filled the post of Minister of Public Instruction, while Baudelaire's reputation grows every day with the lovers of fine literature. All the same it is a good thing to get into the Academy, from a social as well as from a professional point of view. In England when a man gets made a peer people say that merit never wins that distinction. The fact remains that a peerage has an approximate cash value of £30,000, though as a matter of fact people usually have to pay very much more than that to get one. Still, there it is £30,000 and enormous social advantages.

The barber's mistake is, as I have said, quite a common one. There are scores of thousands of French men and women who are decorated by Government with the violet ribbon and who can put "officer of the Academy" on their cards, and a very large percentage of these people, usually belonging to the lower middle classes and inferior functionaries, such as stationmasters, schoolmasters, post office officials and so on, fancy that they rank as Academicians. One heard the other day of a man who, on being appointed, printed "Knight of the Academy" on his card, and when he was asked what that meant, he said that he was entitled to call himself "officer of the Academy," but that he did not like to spring his whole title on the public at once. "I begin by calling myself 'chevalier'; later on perhaps I will let people know that I am entitled to the higher rank of *officier*," he explained. This violet ribbon and the decoration which it implies are very eagerly coveted in France. There are upwards of 30,000 applications for it each time that the minister has a list in preparation, which is about three times a year. Only ten per cent. of these applicants are successful, and of these fully ninety-nine per cent. have no claims whatever for literary distinction. One sees pork butchers, barbers, midwives, servants even, who can hardly write their names, decorated with an order which is supposed to be the reward for literary or artistic achievement. The result is that the violet ribbon is much laughed at, especially by those who have not yet succeeded in gaining it.

I remember being at a dinner party given in honour of my friend Coquelin Cadet, when he was made an "officer of Academy," and was surprised to hear the constant chaff which was flung at the actor. He himself ridiculed his distinction. But here again the decoration has a cash value. It obtains for the wearer all sorts of privileges and complacencies on the part of police, railway and other officials. Everybody knows that it means nothing, yet everybody respects it. You may go on telling people that the ministers simply fling these decorations away. There is a well-authenticated story about a Minister of Public Instruction who was lunching at Foyot's and who, at the end of the *déjeuner*, in pulling out some papers from his pocket, dropped a bulky manuscript. One of the party picked it up and the minister said: "Oh, that is a list of people who are to have the *palmes académiques* which I have got to sign. You can all put your names on the list if you like." Everybody at the minister's table added his name to the paper, amidst shouts of laughter. Then the people at the next table clamoured for a like privilege, and in the end every single person who was lunching at Foyot's that morning got his name on the minister's list, and in due course received the violet ribbon. There are many other similar stories as fully authenticated, but, in spite of them, people hanker after the distinction, and show deference to those who have got it. With regard to the red ribbon of the Legion of Honour, which is much more difficult of obtainment, the same is noticed. Everybody knows that the best men don't get decorated; that the ministers never decorate themselves; that Gambetta, Lamartine, Balzac, and other most distinguished men passed through life with no red ribbon in their buttonholes. Yet everybody is eager to have it, and many will do anything, almost, to obtain it.

Yet when all has been said the fact still remains that in no country in the world is literature more highly honoured or better rewarded than in France. What, for instance, can England or America offer the successful writer in the way of a reward or of triumph equal to the apotheosis of which Monsieur Edmond Rostand was the hero at the French Academy one day in June, six years ago? When in England a popular novelist, who has combined big sales with a certain amount of political service, receives the doubtful honour of a knighthood, it is considered that the nation has honoured literature in his person to the utmost that can be expected of it.

Monsieur Rostand was elected a member of the Academy two years before he took his seat, and his reception was deferred simply because he confessed himself unable, until quite shortly before his admission, to compose the speech exacted of him at his reception. The mood was not upon him, and Rostand is a man of moods.

In the conversation related in the previous chapter he describes in his own words the fits of depression which come upon him, how adverse or unfair criticism plunges him into the "most sombre melancholy," how he fancies himself "hated of all men, and the butt of every tongue," and how, after the failure of *La Princesse Lointaine*, he "never left his room for five long months, a victim to sheer *folie de la persecution*."

It was under the influence of one of these severe neurasthenic attacks that Rostand fled from Paris to the sand-dunes and pine-forests of Cambo, where his home now is, and forced the

Immortals to wait. And this was caused merely by the spiteful attacks that appeared in the papers after his Ode of Welcome to the Empress of Russia had been read at that memorable *soirée* at Compiègne. It will be remembered that in this poem the various articles of furniture in the empress's boudoir were represented as speaking of their imperial visitor, and the curtains were made to exclaim: "Oh! Oh! C'est une Impératrice!" This lent itself to ridicule, and the pressmen, all envious of Rostand's extraordinary talents and corresponding success, seized upon it to attack the sensitive poet. "Oh! Oh! C'est une Impératrice!" became one of the gags of Paris, and with both hands to his ears Rostand rushed away from Paris, vowing never to set foot in the town again. Such hypersensitiveness is one of the concomitants of the artistic temperament. In Rostand it is developed to a morbid degree. He spoke of resigning from the Academy before he had even been admitted, such terror of Paris was upon him. That wore off, but it was months and months before he could bring himself to write anything about Henri de Bornier that at all satisfied him. But he is always his own severest critic.

"I am very severe on myself," he said to me, "and have destroyed far more than I have ever published. When I have written something I put it away in a drawer. Later, when it comes under my hand by hazard, I sit in judgment upon it, and if it is found in the least wanting, it is thrown into the fire." Hundreds and hundreds of sheets of the Academy speech were thus torn up and thrown away. The very number of his fauteuil—Bornier's fauteuil in the Academy was Fauteuil 13, and Rostand is the thirteenth occupant of it since the foundation—filled him with desponding forebodings, for, like most artists, Rostand is extremely superstitious. Well, at last he mastered his nervous apprehensions, set definitely to work and produced a speech of which it was said in Paris at the time that nothing more beautiful in the way of oratorical prose had ever been heard in the capital of France. Rostand's critics tried to console themselves by saying that Rostand is a born actor and that it was his theatrical delivery which gave such a wonderful effect to his speech, but that is a piece of criticism which influences nobody. The hundreds of thousands of people who know the speech only from reading it in the papers were as enthusiastic as the fortunate few who were present in the Academy Hall when it was delivered. It was a very wonderful piece of prose, full of startling poetical images, and to the connoisseur a pure delight.

The reception took place during what is known in Paris as the "Grande Semaine." That year the week which began with the Derby and ended with the Grand Prix was generally known as Rostand Week. One talked of nobody else. The shops were full of his portraits; the booksellers displayed his few works. For weeks everybody who knew an Academician was on foot trying to get an entry. Pingard, the curious official who acts as secretary to the Institute, was harassed by the importunate and found ample opportunity for the exercise of those qualities which have not rendered him a very popular man in Paris. On Wednesday the entrance to the Institute was blocked by a crowd of outcasts, who, for prices varying from two to eight dollars, kept the places for the ticketholders. These men passed the night under the shadow of the Institute, so detested of Alphonse Daudet. On arriving next day the ticketholder changed places with his *locum tenens* at the doors, and when these were opened passed in without too much struggling. It was worth the fee paid.

Rostand arrived early in an ordinary cab. He was looking very pale. His uniform was hidden beneath a long overcoat, above the top of which the green collar of the Academy coat peeped. The tip of his sword stuck out behind, and that was all that the outside crowd saw of his accoutrement as he dashed into the building. But after the speech had been delivered, and when he came out, he showed himself to the people of Paris in his dress, carrying the overcoat on his arm, and received the heartiest welcome. A pleasant surprise awaited him on arriving in the room where he was to wait for the beginning of the ceremony. This was a letter from Paul Meurice, enclosing a drawing in pen and ink by Victor Hugo. Meurice wrote that it had been Hugo's custom always to send a souvenir to each new Academician, and that Rostand must take the accompanying gift—a drawing of the house of Ruy Blas, as the poet fancied it—as coming direct from Victor Hugo. That great name was in the minds of many whilst Rostand was reading his speech. Much of it, many of the phrases, the tricks of antithesis, the piling up of metaphors, were of the Hugo school of prose. From the waiting-room the new Academician was fetched into the hall by his two sponsors, Jules Claretie and Paul Hervieu. His entry lacked none of those theatrical attributes which in French public ceremonies are never wanting. The military guard presented arms as he passed; the drums beat a roll. He looked nervous, and his hand gripped the pommel of his little sword.

A pretty incident it was, just before the entrance of the corps of Academicians, the arrival of Madame Rostand, very blond and rosy, with heightened colour, leading her two little boys, so well behaved and prettily excited. When she appeared people murmured her name; in order to see better they stood up. Embarrassed, she sought her chair, and her embarrassment was full of grace. And suddenly, spontaneously, from all sides there came "Bravas!" I think they saluted at the same time the charming muse of the poet and also the dainty poetess, for she wears this double crown.

The house was packed and the heat was very great. One hemicycle was filled with the Academicians, *au grand complet*, the opposite one was occupied by the favoured guests. The ordinary public, journalists and *tutti quanti* were disposed of in the galleries. Here one had indeed a better view of the ceremony and of the orator than those in the seats below except those in the front ranks. The ladies all wore theatre hats, and the theatre hat in Paris that year was a formidable thing. It was of the size of a tea-tray, and it was loaded with everything conceivable. Sarah Bernhardt had left her hat in the cloakroom, but her example had been followed by nobody, and those sitting in the back rows could see fine specimens of the milliner's art, but of the Immortals or of Rostand little or nothing. However, everybody heard Rostand's wonderful speech, and was swayed by the real magic of his voice. Sarah Bernhardt was in evident ecstasies and led the ever-recurring applause. Yet if one closed one's eyes one might almost fancy that it was Sarah herself who was speaking. There were here the same softness, the same pleading, the ring of the voice of gold, which have so greatly influenced the poets of France of this age, that more than one successful book which one might name might be described as written as though the passages were to be recited by her. Madame Sorel, another actress, cried out: "What a lesson I am receiving!" Monsieur Lépine, the Prefect of Police, during a burst of applause more frantic than the rest, shouted out to Rostand's doctor: "It is you that we are applauding. Such a cure has never yet been seen!" And the fact is that the young poet looked in fine form, anything but the nervous wreck that he is popularly supposed to be, and as the caricaturists delight in portraying him. He looked nervous at first, but as his eyes fell on his wife, who was sitting in the front row, a smile came over his face, and it was to her, the fair Rosamonde of his heart, that he addressed the opening words of his speech.

"Gentlemen," he began, speaking straight at the young lady, who in spite of her emotion was seen to smile. Whenever any signs of hesitation betrayed themselves—and these very few and of the faintest—he turned towards his wife, whose eyes seemed to prompt him. In the opinion of everybody present Edmond Rostand was a born actor, who would have triumphed on the boards no less greatly in this capacity than as a dramatic writer. He seemed supremely happy, enjoying to the full this occasion of producing himself, of performing in an elegant costume before the pick of France. As to the costume, it may be noted that this audacious young man thought fit to modify the uniform consecrated by 250 years of usage to suit his own taste. The collar of Rostand's coat is cut in the evased Medicis style and no longer stands up firm and erect. It gives a Byronic touch to the costume, which is not displeasing though hardly "correct." The central idea indeed of the Academician's costume is stiffness and formality. Byronism has nothing to do in this austere and official assembly. But Rostand always differentiates himself in his dress from his fellows. In ordinary life he dresses without reference to prevailing fashions. At the Academy on this occasion there was no trace of languor about him. He seemed full of snap and vim. Doubtless the surroundings were to him a marvellous stimulant; the excitement gave him force, and for encouragement there was the persistent and thunderous applause that greeted each well-polished and sonorous phrase. He told us, of course, few things about de Bornier that we did not know, but he invested that poet's drab life with colour and poetry.

As soon as he began his address, all Rostand's mannerisms and affectations were forgotten. He read marvellously; he gave to his phrases a bearing heroic, he scanned them, he chanted them, he trumpeted them. The life of Henri de Bornier, his predecessor, was neither full nor rich, and yet Rostand's genius made it interesting and attractive.

In speaking of the production of the *Fille de Roland*, Rostand said: "You know that it had a most religious opening. I wish only to speak to you of the dramatic effect. The whole pit stood when it realised that Gérald was victor. Oh, when, at the most exciting moment of that evening of 1875, they were spoken suddenly, those words so tender; when they came from the depth of the past, like a consoling caress from the distant voices of the Fatherland, those words so simple that they must have grown in the warmest depths of the popular feeling, from where the air of the melodies would have carried them in the song of Roland; when the pit echoed gruffly the old and loved exclamation, 'O France, sweet France,' it seemed to France that she heard herself named for the first time since her defeat, and she poured forth her tears as convalescents who thought they were healed in hearing their name. All her assembled sons, to whom a pious brother taught again the ancient and good custom of naming their mother, uttered a cry; and they gazed at one another, affrighted at being made to remember, suddenly, all together, the sweetness of France."

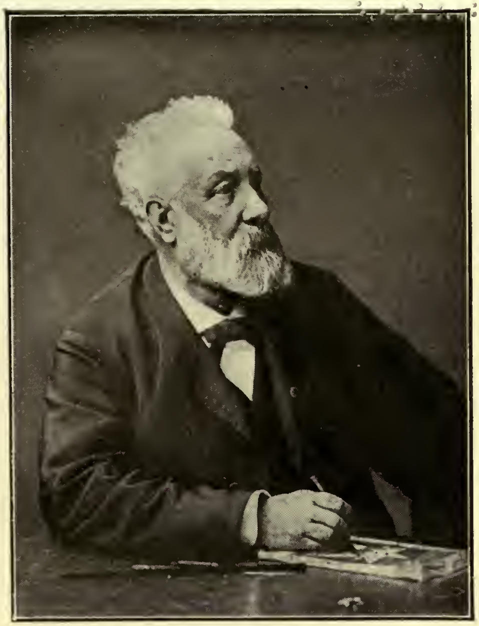
The peroration was brilliant.

"It was of some hero that Monsieur de Bornier was dreaming when he put his hand to his heart and weakness came over him. Death came to fix upon his features the beauty that Inspiration used to cast upon them. . . . A little green coat falls on a coffin which is not very long. It is an Academician going away under the cypress-trees. Nothing was wanting to the Last Tragique. His old age must have been very sweet to him by reason of the whisperings of his conscience. . . . When he walked through his native town it was along a street which had been called after him. His vintagers used to sing his praises. . . . He had caused a lake to be dug in his park so that he might be able to fish for the moon at home. . . . Nothing had been wanting to him, not even to have surpassed, one day, the highest heads in stature, and that by the whole length of his bust. That was the day when, after one of the performances of *La Fille de Roland*, he was carried in triumph on the shoulders of the crowd!"

The speech overflowed with imagery and at the same time was full of much information of interest. Rostand showed that, albeit a poet and a dreamer, he had very firm political opinions, and his speech contained more than one reference to these. From the conversations I have had with him, I gathered that his sympathies with the Republic as it is to-day are not very keen. He seems to admire Rochefort, and made a very flattering allusion to him in describing a feat of heroism in which the fathers of Rochefort and of Bornier engaged when soldiers together in Napoleon's army during the ill-fated Russian campaign. This allusion did not provoke much applause. Rochefort is little liked in official circles, and the Academy is nothing if not official. But Lemaitre and Coppée applauded vigorously, and so did their friends, and Monsieur Lépine looked as though he would like to applaud too, for Monsieur Lépine had a very bitter grudge against Monsieur Combes, the Prime Minister, whose *bête noire* Rochefort is.

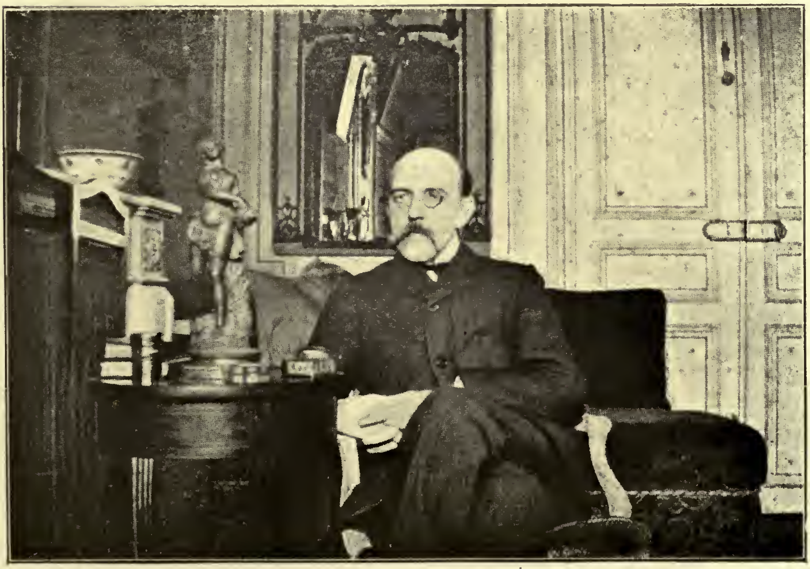
Monsieur de Vogüé's speech was the glorification of Rostand, and such was the enthusiasm of the public with the hero of the day that M. de Vogüé's discreet eulogies seemed all too pale. It was some time before, in the course of his oration, he came to Rostand, and one expected people to cry out and remind him of whom it was his to speak. Whilst the viscount was speaking Rostand, who had taken his seat in the thirteenth fauteuil, looked at times ill at ease. It was the more trying part of the day. To be seated in the gaze of Paris, whilst a gentleman for over an hour declaims one's talents, history and virtues, must be an ordeal. One has to look as though one deprecated the fine things that are being said about one, and at the same time it must not be too evident that this deprecation is assumed. I fancy he was glad when Monsieur de Vogüé had finished bidding him heartily welcome. What some people to whom de Vogüé said was neither new nor very interesting may have thought, as they looked at the wonderful scene, of the many who, though literary glories of France, never came to sit where this youth was sitting amidst the incense of the world—Balzac, because he had once failed in business as a printer, and because the Academy cannot admit bankrupts; Dumas because he had negro blood in his veins, and was too exuberant of manner to be a fit member of a society so aristocratic and dignified; Zola, because, because, because. I wished that Alphonse Daudet had been sitting by my side. What bitter things he would have found to say about the ceremony. But I found myself thinking most often of poor lonely old Jules Verne, living, sick, half-blind and forgotten down in Amiens, whose ambition in life it always was to be a member of the Academy, and who at one time, under the auspices of Alexandre Dumas, *fils*, seemed to have some chances of election. I remember the apathetic way in which he spoke to me once, when we met, of his hopes and disappointment. "Since then," he said, "the whole of the forty seats have been filled afresh." Doubtless if there was justice in this world Verne would have been in a place of honour on Thursday last, his writings having delighted the universe. One could name at least twenty Academicians who have not the twentieth part of his claim to that honour. Poor old Jules Verne! I was with him in Amiens only a few days before his death, four years ago. He was then in great fear of losing his eyesight altogether. One eye had already gone. "If I look across the road," he said, "it is all mist." He spoke of his horror of blindness, he, who spent all his days reading. Up to the very last he continued his regular daily output of work, and was so far ahead of his agreement with Hetzel, that two Jules Verne novels will continue to be published annually for some years to come. I remember we talked with him about some of the young men who have made names and fortunes by imitating his particular branch of fiction—the pseudo-scientific adventure story, and though he was kindly as ever, he said that some of them did not play quite fair. "To get out of a difficulty," he said, "they invent something, some metal, or gas, or something, which performs wonders. That I never allowed myself to do. I only used what there is, and always followed the laws of nature." I was heartily glad that he did not live to find himself deprived of his sight. That would have been too sad an end for a man who has given us all such delight. The moral of his long life is once again that work is the panacea for all evils, that with work to do a man may live with a fair degree of content in a place the least suited to his tastes and temperament, and however fond he may be of brilliant society he can resign himself, given he have a regular daily task to perform, to isolation and solitude. Everybody wondered when Jules Verne, the sparkling boulevardier, left Paris and went and buried himself in that most provincial and dismal of cities, Amiens. But he let people laugh, and remained *perdu*, as far as his personality was concerned, for nearly fifty years, working steadily.

One of the things that Jules Verne and I talked about during that sad last meeting was the annoyance that popular writers undergo from the correspondence of strangers. He told me that he was constantly receiving manuscripts from people he did not know, accompanied by requests that he should send the writers his detailed opinion and criticism on their productions. I told him that my great-grandfather, Wordsworth, was in the same way pestered by strangers. There used to be at Rydal Mount a large oaken chest, which was



LAST PORTRAIT OF JULES VERNE.

Taken shortly before his death at Amiens, at a time when blindness was threatening this great writer and good man. Given by him to author at their last meeting.



HENRI DE REGNIER.

French poet and novelist, of whom the author predicts early election to the French Academy. He is a son-in-law of the late J. M. de Heredia, and brother-in-law to Pierre Louys.

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filled with these manuscripts. My mother told me that there was once a poet who kept writing to her grandfather, claiming some manuscript which he said he had sent to him, but which the old gentleman knew nothing about. One day after a very urgent letter from this man, my mother, who was then a very little girl, went to the oak chest, selected the fattest manuscript she could find and sent it to the man, enclosing half-a-crown, which she extracted from her money-box, and wrote, "Grandpapa Wordsworth cannot find your manuscript, and does not remember ever to have received it. But I send you a very big poem which will perhaps do as well, and I also send you half-a-crown of my own money. So I hope you will be satisfied, and that you will not send grandpapa any more letters, as he is an old man and they worry him."

After the speeches were over the usual demonstrations, which, common in France under such circumstances, always strike Anglo-Saxons as "odd," took place. Coquelin clasped Rostand in his arms after the manner of stage fathers. A bevy of ladies next surrounded the poet, and kissing proceeded again. Many people had tears of emotion in their eyes, as though there were anything in the business to cry over. One of these tearful persons, however, I particularly noted and wondered whether the tears might not be tears of regret for his career.

This was Catulle Mendés, who died so tragically at Saint Germain-en-Laye at the beginning of the year. He was a great writer and a poet of the highest distinction. No man was by his talents more fitted to join the company which Richelieu instituted. One can think of a hundred tender and beautiful sayings of his. "Pearls because they touched you, tears because they fell from you," is what he wrote about the drops of water in a woman's bath. But for the sake of money he deliberately prostituted his pen. He wrote many vile things, as vile as Armand Silvestre, or Guy de Maupassant, who under the pseudonym of Maufrigneuse contributed greatly to contemporary French pornography. I should say Mendés' erotic writings must have had a hugely pernicious influence on the youth of France. And there is this to be said about the French Academy, at any rate, that no man is admitted to its bosom whose reputation is not spotless as a writer. This is as it should be.

Mendés also had found Paris too strenuous for him, and had retired to work to St Germain-en-Laye. And if dulness inspires literary activity (which I deny) no better place, of course, could be found than the Residenz where James the II. once lived, and where his "nobler parts" (whatever they may have been) are buried in a tomb erected by the piety of Queen Victoria. It is as Americans say "the limit" of provincial seclusion. It ensures quiet, to the extent that motors are discouraged from crossing its drowsy streets. One has heard that the Mayor of St Germain did on a notable occasion lay his bulky form prone in the dust so as to compel a "scorcher" who was approaching *à toute vitesse* to slacken speed. Of course, at the Pavillon Henri Quatre, where the famous head waiter of the Maison Dorée spent his last years of activity, there is life and animation, but that reputed restaurant is outside the town.

The story of that waiter's life by the way illustrates a condition of things, a relationship between employers and employed, which has quite passed away in France. In these days of trades-unions one would look in vain for such loyalty on the part of a servant and such confidence in the *patron*. This man had identified himself with the fortunes of the house which he served, and his story reads like a page out of some Parisian Dickens. I happened to lunch at the Maison Dorée on the very last day on which it opened—but the fact that next day the shutters were not going to come down again was known neither to me nor to anyone else. I was waited on by the old head waiter whom I had known for years at the place, as a very model of *maîtres d'hôtel*. I found him sadly altered. His face looked pinched, and I do believe that the tears stood in his eyes (if they did not drop upon my *pêche à la Melba*) as in answer to my inquiry what ailed him he answered me, "The house is going to close. This is the last time I shall have the honour of waiting on monsieur."

I believe that the old man's grief was entirely caused by the fall of the house and not by any personal anxiety. How great this might have been may be imagined from the fact that—as I afterwards learned—when the Maison Dorée closed there was due to him from the business almost the total sum of his earnings during the thirty years he had acted as waiter there, wages and *pourboires*. It appeared that he had only taken a very small weekly sum as pocket money. The total due to him exceeded £4000. He was in fact the principal creditor, and his faith in the concern was so strong that he had stuck to the house till the last. There was considerable difficulty in getting the money out of the assets of the firm to discharge his claim, so that when the Maison Dorée put up its shutters for the last time he was obliged, being penniless practically, to take a fresh position. So, in the hopes of meeting many of his old customers, he engaged as a waiter at the Café de la Terrasse, or Pavillon Henri Quatre, at St Germain, where he remained until the affairs of the Maison Dorée were finally settled. I was glad to hear that the faithful old servant did not lose anything. Part of his claim was paid in cash, and the balance was given him in the form of a small estate in the country. To this estate the old gentleman then retired to live on the income produced by the investment of his savings, and no doubt to pass over in his memory the generations of men and women of the world whom it was his lot to wait upon in the days of the splendour of the house, where his working life was spent. What memoirs he could have written if he had chosen to do so! He must have had in memory materials for a cycle of social comedies, and of tragedies also, no doubt.

I once spent some melancholy and lonely days in St Germain. It was just after the death of Ernest Dowson. We had agreed to spend a few weeks together there, and after his death I went there and fancied myself in his gentle company. And I remember that the very first day on going out into the forest I saw—it was early spring—a large yellow butterfly disporting itself under the trees. Overhead a snowstorm was brewing, and even as I was watching the gaudy fragile thing in its aerial rigadoon the white flakes began to fall. Gently at first, so that the saffron wings were powdered as though for a minuet. And then the clouds broke and the storm beat down the poor little thing and crushed its life out. And the whole of Dowson's pitiful story was here, the poor poet setting his little brilliancy and feeble verve against the pitiless forces of a cruel world.

The castle itself is a sad disappointment to those romantically inclined. Little or nothing remains of the building as it was in the days of King James. It has been entirely restored, and only a few rooms which are used as a museum are open to such of the public as are interested in fossils. A more interesting show is to be found in the town itself, where one may see a model of the head of Cartouche. It is made of wax but the hair and beard are those of the famous thief, as is also the ragged cap which is placed upon the head. One has thought of Cartouche as a gallant fellow, but a visit to the Library at St Germain will dispel this idea. The lowest kind of sneak-thief, of cly faker, that is what this hero of a thousand romances appears to have been. It is a horrid face, yet all the same it is not without pity that, when one is once more face to face with the château, one remembers as one of the bad deeds of the *ancien régime* that Cartouche's little brother was hung up by the arms on the Place de Grève, and allowed to die of starvation, simply because he was Cartouche's brother. For the rest one must never believe what one hears of people without satisfying oneself of the truth of the allegations. For instance, when I first came to St Germain and thought about James II., I was under the impression that he was a craven. I had been fed on Whiggish lies and slanders. It was shortly afterwards that I read that both Turenne and Condé considered and described James II. as a man absolutely fearless, and cut out by nature to be a great captain. Legends constantly dispel themselves. Not very long ago, as another instance, I read on indisputable evidence that Charlotte Corday was plain and fat. I had always thought her to have been a person of great beauty, to which I had attributed the sudden infatuation of poor Adam Lux.

A little thing about Louis' hospitality to James often recurred to my mind, when I was in St Germain-en-Laye. On entering the splendid apartment prepared for him in the château, James found an oaken chest on the table of his bedroom, which contained 20,000 louis in gold, "spending money." Louis, who was a man of the world, had thought that the exiled king might very possibly "want a bit to go on with," and this regal sub. was the result of his cogitations. James seems to have spent the £16,000 very quickly, and one of the reasons why Louis got rather tired of his guest was because James was constantly drawing him aside with an, "Oh! by the way . . ." and a request for a small advance.

I was told by a former *concierge* of the château of St Germain that the cellars and dungeons were full of horrible places, trap-doors opening on pits with spikes in gloomy depths and revolving *chevaux de frise* over bottomless *oubliettes*. But, as I have said, none of these things can be visited. The huge moat is now the rendezvous of homeless cats, apropos of whom I heard a story which is not very creditable to the person who told me. It was a woman who had formerly been employed in the château. An English lady who was visiting St Germain was so touched with the misery of the cats in the moat that on leaving the town she arranged with this woman to send her fifty francs a month to be applied to the purchase of meat for the starving animals.

I understood that the monthly two pounds had been regularly sent ever since, but according to the woman's own statement the money had not been used as intended.

"I do not see myself," she said, "throwing good money into the moat. *Pas si bête*. And so as regards the five *pistoles*"—here she pointed to herself—"*adjugées*. But for the good of the cats I never fail to drink their healths each time that I go into a *marchand de vins*. And if their health is good, what more can they ask for? Health before all."

CHAPTER XV

Criminals in France—Pickpockets—Why the Artful Dodger dodges France—Housebreaking *v.* Burglary—The *Cambrioleur* and the Burglar—Where the French hide their Money—The Gang of "Polishers"—Acts of Kindness to Strangers—How One was not forgotten—The Confidence Trick—Blackmailers in Paris—The Spanish Prisoner—How the Trick originated—*Mie Prigione*—Arrested as a Pickpocket—For defending the Queen—Jean Hiroux and Monsieur St Clair—A Tramp's Philosophy of Life—On the Brink of Black Maria—An Enemy to the Rescue—On avoiding unpleasant Experiences—An American Pupil—*Finis.*

The reference in the last chapter to the woman who robbed the starving cats of their alimony recalls many other types of French criminals, though perhaps none more base.

England has long enjoyed abroad the unenviable reputation of breeding, training and letting loose on the world the most skilful pickpockets, just as Italy stands *facile princeps* in the matter of highwaymen, or Germany in the production of cosmopolitan swindlers of the class known to the police as the "flash mob." As a matter of fact I do not think that England at all deserves her bad reputation, which dates more or less from the days when Charles Dickens wrote "Oliver Twist," and it would be easy to prove from police statistics that the percentage of Englishmen amongst the pickpockets arrested on the Continent is a very small one. On the other hand, the reason of this may be that the Artful Dodgers of London little care to practise abroad, because of the great severity of the foreign courts in dealing with English pickpockets, just on account of their reputation. In France for instance there appears to a fixed penal tariff applied to foreign *voleurs à la tire*, and that is the maximum allowed by the penal code, five years' imprisonment. I fancy that most of the pickpockets who operate in France are Germans or Italians, though American enterprise is not lacking in this direction also. Bill Sykes, however, and the English burglar fraternity may derive satisfaction from the statement that, in their department of crime, the English cracksman for skill and daring has no Continental rival. In France houses are rarely if ever broken into at night. During the last few years there have only been two such cases in France, and in each case the burglar proved to be an Englishman. The sentences were heavy—penal servitude for life—on both.

The French burglar, or rather housebreaker (for he operates in the daytime), is known as a *cambrioleur*, from the slang word for room, which is *cambriole*. It is only when he attacks an uninhabited house, say a suburban villa, whose owners are away at the seaside, that he takes the risk of the increased penalty, for as in England burglary in France is punished much more severely than mere housebreaking. He only "goes for" premises when their occupants are away. He does not want to have to kill to ensure his safety, though if he is caught in the act of robbery he invariably attempts murder. He is armed with a revolver and a dagger, but generally relies on his *pince-monseigneur* (jemmy) for silencing his aggressor. It is a terrible weapon. But as I say, he does not want any unpleasantness.

If in this matter the *cambrioleur* takes few risks, he usually reaps a very rich harvest. The love of the French for economy is proverbial, and another typical feature of the national character is that people who save like to keep their money in cash, where they can see, feel and count it. The bulk of the French people of the lower and middle classes have little confidence in savings banks and investments, and since the Panama smash this confidence has still further diminished. So in most rooms and apartments in Paris the *cambrioleur* is assured of finding a sum in hard cash, and it is surprising to hear what sums they do find. I remember once reading about a fire that had broken out in the attics of a house in Paris. Amongst the rooms burned out was one which was occupied by a milkman's carrier. His despair, bordering on insanity, on learning what had happened was explained by the fact that he kept his savings in a box in this room, £800, of which only £300 were in gold. Who in England would be so reckless as to keep £800 in cash in a box in an attic unoccupied during the day? Who, not an artist? I add this, because I remember hearing about Sir Henry Irving, whose disregard for money was supreme, that being asked one day what he had done with a large sum of money which had been paid over to him by some solicitors under a lady's will, that he answered that he had put it into his hat-box and fancied it might be there still.

That resembles the French way of hoarding money. Some years ago a provincial assize court dealt with a gang of housebreakers, who were known as "The Polishers." These were convicted of a number of robberies in farmhouses. The sums stolen varied from £20 to £200. The *modus operandi* was to send two women of the gang, representing themselves as French polishers, who offered their services at such moderate rates that they were nearly always engaged. It was their business to watch where the money with which they were paid when the work was done was taken from. The *cache* having thus been "located," the rest was easy. The *cache* was sometimes a clog, sometimes an old kettle, sometimes a hole in the mattress, but most often the *armoire a glace* (cupboard with looking-glass door). This is the favourite hiding-place in France. The notorious Prado knew this, and after he had cut the throat of the frail Marie Aguétant he went straight to her *armoire a glace*, broke it open, and found her savings, about £500, dishonourably amassed. This custom of using the *armoire a glace* as a safe is a rooted one in France. My old Brittany housekeeper always used to advise me to use mine for hoarding the plentiful earnings of my pen, and I could not get her to understand that, of all places in the house, it was the least secure.

Apropos of this woman, a letter which I recently received from her illustrates the consequences of doing acts of kindness to strangers. We have heard of the rich legacies left to kindly folk who once have done to some poor person an act of benevolence. A man helps an old gentleman across the street, and becomes his universal legatee.

A woman gives a meal to a lad, the lad becomes a trust potentate and pours wealth into the humble abode where he enjoyed her hospitality. Well, some years ago, as I was walking on the road from Vernon to Rouen, I met a man limping along. He looked very distressed, so I accosted him and asked him what his trouble was. His said his boots were so bad that it was almost impossible for him to walk. He added that he was out of work, but was making for Paris, where he was assured of a good position. I had many pairs of boots at home, and so I decided to set him on his feet again. So I took him back to my cottage and, though my housekeeper very strongly objected, I fitted him with a very good pair of lace-up boots, and having given him a meal sent him on his way foot-whole and rejoicing, towards that Paris where his expectations of fortune lay.

I had forgotten all about him, until a day or two ago I heard from Vernon that the stranger had returned. "That man," wrote Madame Gloux, "to whom some years ago you gave a pair of boots, called at the house this morning, and wanted to see you. I asked him his business, and he said that he was tramping to Havre, where he had fine prospects, that his feet hurt him very much, and that he had come to see whether you had not another pair of boots to give him."

"*Quelle confiance!*" added the good woman.

Apropos of *confiance*, it is on the Continent that the confidence trick especially flourishes. There it is known as the *vol a l'Américain*, and indeed I believe that this form of robbery was invented by the Americans. Hardly a week passes in Paris or

Berlin but one hears of someone who has been robbed in this way. But, as a leading French police official pointed out to me, these cases are hardly ever taken up by the police, because almost invariably the actual victim was in intention a thief also. Having exchanged portfolios with the benevolent and millionaire stranger the eventual victim makes haste to disappear. It is only when he comes to examine the contents of the portfolio, satchel or portmanteau that he raises the cry that he has been robbed. The thieves in this branch of crime speculate on the natural dishonesty of the average man under strong temptation.

Blackmailing, especially of women, flourishes in France. In Berlin, as in London, it is men rather who are selected as victims. I am told that *Erpressung* is a fine art in the German capital. In Paris, be it said to the disgrace of a certain section of the French press, many newspapers make themselves the allies of these scoundrels. A book could be written on the subject of Parisian *chantage.* At one time I used to frequent a big *café* on the Boulevard Montmartre which was the rendezvous of an organised gang of these fellows. I remember that one night all were present except one man whose appearance had attracted my attention. His associates seemed to be waiting for him with some anxiety, glances at the clock were frequent, and I gathered that some coup of unusual importance was in progress. At last the man appeared, but in what a state! His elegant frock-coat was torn, his hat was smashed in, both his eyes were blacked, and he bore other traces of having undergone extreme violence. Yet he was radiant with triumph, and after he had taken his seat and ordered his first *absinthe gommée, avec beaucoup de gomme*, he flourished aloft a handful of banknotes. The coup had come off all right, some compromising letters had been sold for 18,000 francs, and here was the money. That the victim's husband, after the deal had been completed, had given him a well-deserved thrashing, and then had kicked him down the stairs, was to him a matter of supreme indifference—all that was in the way of his particular business.

The *vol à l'enterrement*, or buried treasure swindle, does not, thanks to Mr Labouchere and other journalists, make many victims in England. Abroad however the Spanish prisoner and his congeners still reap an abundant harvest. If you come to think of it, the famous Humbert swindle, with the phantom millions buried in a safe, was only a variation of this form of robbery. Thousands of letters go out yearly from Barcelona to all parts of the world, their names and addresses being taken from various Continental directories. I myself have been honoured with such communications. Monsieur Goron told me that hundreds of people have consulted him as to the *bona fides* of their mysterious correspondent, "and," he added, "however much I may dissuade them there is always a percentage who in spite of my advice walk into the trap." This swindle by the way was invented by a Frenchman, named St Firmin, and there is still extant a letter written by him in 1798 to a Parisian tradesman named Purvert, in which he asks for an advance of funds to enable him to travel to the spot where a buried treasure was hidden. Purvert was to have his share in the proceeds. St Firmin said that he had been valet to a nobleman, who, fleeing the dangers of the Revolution, had buried a chest containing £4000 in gold and a quantity of jewels. St Firmin was arrested in 1801, and then it came out that the original story was quite true. A treasure had been, to his knowledge, buried under the circumstances described. Unfortunately the *cache* had been rifled, so that the ex-valet's stock in trade was a myth. He had duped scores of people with his story and had immortalised himself as the inventor of one of the most productive forms of fraud to which human cupidity and credulity fall ready victims.

Although my experiences of life have been very varied, I cannot say that I have ever been detained as a prisoner in a real prison. On the other hand, I have not infrequently been locked up in French police stations. 'Tis the common lot of foreign correspondents. One is in a riot, a sense of duty forbids one to retire, and so one gets grabbed in a police rush. The souvenir of the prison house comes to me as I write about criminals. I myself was once arrested as a pickpocket and spent a cold winter's night in the police cell of the *commissariat de police* of the Rue des Prouvaires. I think the fact that I was an Englishman appeared to the sergeant in charge a convincing proof of my guilt. I had made the acquaintance of a socialist orator at the Café Vachette, and at his request accompanied him on a midnight walk down to the Halles. By the time we got there, I had noticed that the man was rather the worse for liquor, and as he insisted on going into one of the restaurants at the Halles, which kept open all night, I parted company with him. I had hardly gone twenty paces when I heard him shouting out "*Au voleur! Au voleur!*" and soon after was roughly seized by the police. It appeared that he had missed a fifty-franc note. I was taken to the police station, charged and searched. Very fortunately I did not have a note of that value in my pocket. The actual note, it transpired next morning, had been placed by the prosecutor, for safety, in his boot, where he discovered it during the night. For he too was detained—in his case the charge was drunkenness. I remember exciting the derision of the policemen by covering the wretched man with my coat as he lay shivering in the cell in which we were both confined. A *sergent de ville* looking in through the bars had seen how I made the man comfortable and brought up relays of his colleagues to laugh at *cette poire d'Anglais.* It was an unpleasant experience. A man always feels a wild anger when another man turns a key upon him.

But I think that having to submit to compulsory searching is the most degrading of experiences, and for resisting such an outrage, on another occasion, I got at grips with the French law. During the Boer War I was sitting one evening in a little provincial cafe, when the customers, seeing that I was an Englishman, began to insult my country and the Queen. I asked them to desist, finally insisted upon it. When they set upon me I defended myself, and should have got off with dignity, but for the interference of some gendarmes who were passing. These, delighted to tackle an Englishman, promptly arrested me, and took me to the local lock-up. Here they proposed to search me. I was a foreigner, and consequently in all probability a spy. But I resisted. I had committed no offence, it was I who was the injured party, I had done nothing but defend myself against an onslaught. They however tried to use force and lively times ensued. It was some time before these two military heroes were able to effect their purpose and that only thanks to the intervention and reinforcement of a neighbouring winedealer and a haberdasher, who were summoned in the name of the President of the Republic. This was *outrage* to the gendarmes, according to the French law, rebellion, and all the rest of it. Certain articles in the penal code specially deal with such offences and, as the captain said next morning, " my affair was clear," my goose was cooked. For I had to spend the night in the cells, literally on the damp straw of prisons. In my company were two extraordinary old tramps. One of them was a Scotsman, named St Clair, who had several times been expelled the territory of the republic for vagabondage, but who invariably returned to tramp the roads of France. He was a cook by profession. Perhaps it was that which drew him to a country where his art was held in such high esteem. The other was a wild-looking old vagabond of the Jean Hiroux type. He told me that he always carried a pound of tobacco on his person, as also a pound of bread. He showed me that one pocket of his ragged *surtout* was filled with crusts of bread, while the other was brimming over with the fag-ends of cigars and cigarettes. "The man," he said, "who has tobacco and bread in sufficiency has all he really requires in this life." The next morning—it was an outrageous proceeding, which afterwards received due chastisement—the gendarmes took me up to the chief town of the department in which this happened. I was marched along in the company of St Clair and the other tramp, and as nobody knew me in that part of the world I rather enjoyed the experience.

It was amusing to watch the expression on the faces of the people whom we passed. The eyes of those who are safe and comfortable are not kindly towards the poor in the grip of the law. On reaching the head town, I was promptly released by the *Procureur de la République*, my two colleagues were however detained and sent off to the neighbouring prison. I heard poor Jean Hiroux declare at his trial that he must really beg for a more sustaining diet. "The food," he said "is quite inadequate." He had, one remembered, always been well provided when he was at large.

On another occasion I was arrested for "outraging" the police, because I mildly expostulated with some *sergents de ville* whom I saw brutalising a wretched girl in the streets of Paris. She was lying on the pavement, the men were struggling with the poor little thing, and had torn her blouse right off her bosom. I said: "Gentlemen, gentlemen, do not forget that you are soldiers and do not be so rough with a woman." They promptly arrested me, leaving the woman to escape, and marched me off to the commissariat of Monsieur Volet. Here I was charged with having grossly insulted the police, and their declaration was that I had called them *faignants*, the word which I referred to in an early part of this book as the worst insult that can be addressed to a Frenchman. They stated that I had said that I could not understand how men who had been soldiers could be such *faignants* (idlers, loafers) as to come to Paris and do the trade of policemen. Monsieur Volet next morning expressed great indignation. "I myself am a policeman," he said, "and your remark is not flattering." It was useless for me to deny that it would never have entered into my head to make such a remark: the policemen's word was of course taken against mine and I was within measurable distance of being sent off in Black Maria ("the salad basket" as the French call it) when a personal enemy as a *deus ex machina* saved me from that further unpleasantness. This person, having heard of my arrest, sent a man to Monsieur Volet for particulars. Monsieur Volet sent for me to know what motive dictated this inquiry. I said that I presumed the person wished to make the fact of my arrest known in the evening paper to which he corresponded with a view to injuring me at home. Thereupon Monsieur Volet sent the emissary out of his office with a sound rating. "How dare you endeavour to mix a French magistrate up in blackmailing schemes of this kind?" he cried. Myself he then promptly released. The good Monsieur Volet had no doubt reflected that if a man were of sufficient importance for his movements to be considered of interest to the public, he was not a man to treat without consideration and in a high-handed manner. So I did not make acquaintance with Black Maria, nor with the Depôt Central, which for some reasons I regretted. One never can gain enough experience in life. As a general rule, however, unpleasant experiences should be avoided. I remember once enunciating this maxim at the foot of the guillotine to a young American who had come to witness a double execution as a mere sightseer. I told him that the horrid thing would sadden him, and that its evil effect would not soon pass away. I said that such sights tinge one's mind with a lasting dye of sadness. He only laughed and followed eagerly with his eyes all the horrid details of that night's terror. Well, only a month or two ago, while lunching in the grill-room of the Plaza Hotel at New York, I fell in with this man again. He recognised me, came over to my table and reminded me of our Paris night together. Then he said, "You were quite in the right in what you said, though at the time I thought it rather fresh of you to lecture me. I have never got that wretched business out of my head. I sometimes dream of it. At times, just when I'm feeling bully, tip-top, say when I'm with my best girl, the remembrance of it comes across my mind and down go my spirits."

No, one should ever avoid things that are sad.

Perhaps the very saddest thing that has gone to fill with gloom that inward eye, which, as Wordsworth said, is the bliss of solitude, but alas, too often, is its distress, is the recollection of

CALIFORNIA

IRENE OSGOOD,

With "CAHIR," a famous Irish hunter, and "SWIPES," the poacher's dog, whom great and sudden prosperity did not spoil.

TWO OF "IRENE OSGOOD'S" DOGS AT GUILSBOROUGH HALL.

"IVAN," a Russian borzoi, and "LEILA," a Great Dane. Ivan is the dog who hunted wolves in his last dream.

To face page 289.

how a good and beautiful dog was done to death in my presence. This was a Russian hound, a borzoi, who belonged to my wife, Irene Osgood. He had contracted a malignant growth on his leg, and suffered great pain. The veterinary surgeon had pronounced his doom. "There was nothing for it," he had said, "but to put him down." Ivan, that was the dog's name, was a noble creature, if querulous and complaining (as though he ever anticipated what was to be his end). And my wife loved him, for his dignity and repose and the deep affection for her which shone in his large pathetic eyes. When she walked out he used to precede her with slow and stately steps, and never did any Gold-Stick-in-Waiting, whose back has grown supple in the servitude of courts, perform the part of gentleman-usher with better grace. Well, when the surgeon had ruled that Ivan must die, she begged me to be present at his death. Her wish was that he should be chloroformed, her fear was lest the surgeon, to expedite matters, might administer the brutal prussic acid. People who know what prussic acid does and the way in which it brings death, the choking, gasping and prolonged agony of that most unhappy release, will understand her gentle thoughtfulness. And so I had to be present while Ivan passed from this world to those happier hunting grounds where—and I am sure of it—all good dogs go when they die. It was a terrible business, compared to which the Walpurgis horrors of a guillotine night in Paris are anodyne. The drugging poison was held to the dog's nose in a tin vessel, and it was a long time before anæsthesia supervened. I was leaning against the brick wall of the loose box which Fate had transformed into a lethal chamber and I know that I have never felt more sad at heart. And when unconsciousness came the worst began. Delirium took the poor dog and in his dreams he lived over again all his dog-life, and not only the things with which existence had familiarised him, but dim, hereditary, instinctive phases also. We heard him hunting the wolf on the snowbound steppes of his native Russia. We heard his joyous bark of welcome to the returning chase. We heard his minatory growl of menace. And as the heavy minutes dragged on it all grew fainter and fainter. Now the pursuit seemed far off. It drew farther and farther away. . . . I could see the gallant Ivan vanish, over there . . . beyond the snow-laden fir-trees on the grey horizon. . . . At last the surgeon said: "It is all over, sir. His heart has stopped beating."

And the next day I alone followed poor Ivan to his last rest in the dogs' cemetery in Guilsborough Hall. Two gardeners carried him duly shrouded and encoffined. It was Sunday morning and the church bells were ringing. They lowered him into his grave amidst the flowers, and I, taking a handful of soil, scattered it over his humble sarcophagus, and said, "Good-bye, good dog."

And then I went away with an impression of sadness which the years will not efface. For every time that I hear the bells of churches I think of that lonely obsequy.

No, no, no. It is not good to ensue the things that are sad.

It is a very beautiful place, the dogs' cemetery in Guilsborough—that enchanted spot where,

> "Per varios casus, per tot discrimina rerum,"

I have found my Latium.

There are trees all about it, and the place is filled with flowers, there the birds seem at all times to hymn the dead.

All those who lie there were well loved in their day, but I think that the little gravestone at which Irene Osgood looks most often, and with tenderest memory, is one that is engraved with the one word "Swipes."

This was a poacher's dog whom she met one day in the fields, a starving mongrel lurcher, who, famishing and homeless, had come a-poaching for himself. He attached himself at once to her and followed her home. Inquiries were made and it was ascertained that "Swipes" had belonged to a poacher who had shot a gamekeeper and was lying under sentence of death at —— Gaol. Irene Osgood wrote to him and told him that she would take good care of his dog for the rest of his dog-life.

Swipes was raised from the famishing prowl in the cheerless fields to a life of dignity and luxury. He travelled in the style of millionaires, and visited in company with his mistress all the places where the rich go. He has slept on the decks of yachts, he has reclined on the satin couches of the great hotels of both worlds. And he took to this change in his circumstances with the ready adaptability of dogs. But he did not forget his plebeian origin, for, unlike pampered dogs of rich people, he never used to growl at poor folk, or the badly-dressed. But he would let no one approach his mistress unless he had heard her give admittance and access. He was the most devoted dog that one has ever seen, and of a hundred pets, many rare and costly, I think the murderer's mongrel was the one she loved best.

I think, as these pages may have shown, that my experiences in Paris have not on the whole been unpleasant. I have heard much clever talk, I have admired many pretty women, and I have drunk wines of velvety smoothness and exquisite *bouquet.* Also at many well-spread tables have I enjoyed the rare *cuisine* of France.

But far more than all this, I have left the country (though not without *esprit de retour*) with such feelings towards its inhabitants that I can write as the title of this book of mine that the French are my friends. As indeed they are.

So I may count myself to have been most fortunate in my sojourn there. For to make friends in this world is what life has to offer as one of its great joys.

And to have a great joy is to have great good fortune, is it not?

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